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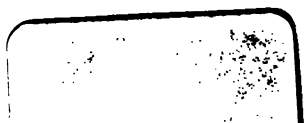
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ANDREW RAMSAY OF ERROL.



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BY

THE AUTHOR OF

"JOHN ARNOLD," "MATHEW PAXTON,"

&c. &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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CHAPTER I.

It is perhaps a strange fancy which has come over me, and people out in the busy world may laugh at the old man imagining he could say anything that should interest them. So it is, I dare say ; nevertheless—I cannot well tell why—the idea has come into my mind that the history of certain events in my own life and experience might be a means of amusing, perhaps also of instructing some one. Any way, I fancy I may be able to fill up an idle hour, and occupy myself, when otherwise I might find time hang heavy on my hands. The most commonplace life—and that mine has been commonplace enough, the

Lord He knows—has almost always sufficient in it to be worth the reading, if it be only decently set forth. I feel more afraid of this same setting than of the stones—gems I am not so ambitious as to imagine them—which my memory may supply ; but nothing venture nothing win, is so true, that I shall at least make the attempt.

We used, long ago when I was at school, to read in the writings of the wise old voluptuary :—

“ *Dimidium facti, qui coepit, habet ; sapere aude ;
Incipe.*”

I am not sure that he was right, but I suppose people would say that I was heretical if I should say he was wrong; and, as the punishment of heresy of every kind has been rather a trying one at all times, and as I have too much of the Epicurean in my own composi-

tion to be desirous of passing through the fires of a purgatory, learned or otherwise, I shall let my own ideas pass. I wish I may find the saying true. If so, I shall be frank enough to confess it before men; I only desire at present that I may find it to be the case, though I rather fear—suspect it is not. Anyway, we shall see.

Most novels, and many true histories, as I mean this to be, give only a few years of the lives of their chief characters, the remainder of their existence is most frequently not even summed up in the old attractive formula of living happy and dying happy which the old story-tellers use. I suppose—though I know very little indeed of those whirling passions which hurry young men and maidens away into the land of fairy—that so far I shall have to follow the good example. Indeed there has been some little of the sweet mad-

ness falling to my own share during my pilgrimage.

There perhaps never was an individual on this earth who did not taste somewhat of the delusion or reality—whichever the reader pleases—of the passion. I have read, indeed, of people who have never known affection in their early life, but somehow they were sure to make up for it afterwards; but I do not believe in such moral monsters. Indeed, I fancy that not only shall I be reckoned a heretic in regard to my belief in Horace, but further that I shall be set down as at least sceptical with respect to a greater than Horace; for I believe that the course of true love does, and that not unfrequently, probably most commonly in my own rank in life, run pretty smoothly. This I am certain of, at least, that I have seldom met with the model villains, and extraordinary fortunes and

fatalities, of which I have read so much in novels, and that tyrannical parents and guardians are by no means so plentiful as people are led to suppose—at least, my own experience says so. Perhaps that may be the case, because the lassies and the lads of my time thought and acted more decidedly and independently than was usually the case in those days, when the type of the present story was invented.

My lucubrations, therefore, promise to be somewhat out of the beaten track, you will say. Well, I should like them to be so, but it by no means follows that I shall be able to get out of the rut; it is very difficult to do so, and very likely requires more genius—any way, more ingenuity—than I possess to hit out a path for myself. However, to make a start, I shall try to write truly—if I write with originality so much the better.

I need not weary my readers with my life from my pap days onwards, nor yet detail all the wonders which a loving mother saw in her son. I shall begin with the time when I went to school, and began to acquire a taste for letters, inculcated, I am sorry to say, by the application now and again of the Scottish substitute for the birch or ferula, the taws. There cannot be better persuaders to a lazy boy than the taws in the hands of an energetic dominie. Perhaps my readers may be ignorant of this instrument of punishment and discipline, the old scholastic symbol of awful rule and right authority, and would like to have a description of it. Well, then, here it is : A long thick leathern strap, about as broad as one's hand, having one of the ends slit into strips somewhat like the five fingers—I do not think the number was limited to five, or restricted as to length. Sometimes, if the

boys or girls were *dour*, or particularly obstinate, or the master peculiarly severe or cruel, these said fingers were hardened by the application of fire, which made the palmy much more hard to bear, and told with much greater effect on the stubborn nature of the culprits. As to the mode of punishment, the victim stood up and stretched out his arm, turning the open palm of the hand upwards, and the flagellator delivered the blow upon the open palm with the taws lightly, or heavily, as the case might be. Never was the discovery made of a mode of warming one's hands on a cold frosty morning which was more effectual than this; it set the blood tingling and dancing through the veins, and if half a dozen palmies—not an extraordinary number in some schools—were given, then there was no chance of requiring to go up to the fire for some time to come, at least. This was the

orthodox mode of punishment, and the orthodox instrument whereby it was inflicted in Scotland of old.

I very dimly remember being sent to my first school. My parents lived then in a Scottish village on the great London Road, and therefore it was by no means so secluded and primitive as the vast majority of places of the same size and character in Scotland. It was rather a pretty place, and the country round not only very beautiful, but likewise very fertile, being in the district where high farming first took root, and had made the greatest progress.

The village was situated on the banks of a beautiful stream, on which, just a very little way below the bridge, there was a little linn or waterfall, over which the Eye leapt into a deep pool, which, in those days, we schoolboys imagined to be a fathomless abyss.

The linn and the name of the river gave the place its name, and Eyelinn is yet well known as a prosperous place by many who know nought about its distinguishing glory—the waterfall. In ordinary cases there was very little water passed over this linn. This fall had been from time immemorial utilized, and a long and strong weir or dam had been built across the river under the bridge, retaining the water, and causing all that reach of the river, which was on the upper side, to assume the appearance of a lake ; while below were a series of mills, kept in motion by the diverted stream. The scenery on the banks of this river was very fine, not so much what is called grand, but very beautiful, varied with green smiling haughs and wooded banks, and both above and below the village presenting many spots of quiet loveliness, to possess which, near some of the large towns,

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would have made the fortunes of pic-nic makers.

Sometimes the Eye came down in flood, "the water down grit" in the vernacular, and then the linn was seen in all its glory; and though I have only a vague hazy remembrance of the majority of those very early events, I do remember being awe-stricken with the magnificence of the scene from the top of the high bridge, when lifted up to see the river rolling past, ignoring weir and obstacle of every kind, and pouring itself impetuously over the rocks, ere it thundered down the precipice. Trees, and gates, and a multitude of other things which had been swept away throughout its route, dashing about in the brown turbid water, gave one the idea of the appearance of the sea after a gale and a shipwreck. It seemed—as I can remember even at a distance of years more

than I care to reckon—a true picture of the ocean, and the idea has remained until this hour.

The village was, in form, something like the letter Y, having the bridge, and an out-lying suburb at the end of one of the horns, and a large public work, and an ancient manor-house at the extremity of the other, while the tail might represent the market-place and main street. At a short distance from the lower end of the place were two small hamlets, one the Newton, just what the name denotes, a few new houses erected by the thriving shopkeepers, in which various small gentilities resided ; and the other, Preston—where were the parish church, church-yard, and manse—was, in verity, the Priest's town of the district, and like all old ecclesiastical places in these districts of the Lothians and the Merse, distinguished by its fertility and the beauty of

its situation on the river's bank. I can truly say that, in all my wanderings, many and various churches and parsonages as I have seen, I have not beheld one which from its position so clearly told of peace and felicity, as Preston did amid its ancient trees, beside the beautiful stream of the Eye.

I don't remember so much of the people of the place as to attempt any description of them. I believe there was much better society than is usually to be found in such places. There was a large number of the wealthy, enterprising gentlemen-farmers to whom Scotland, and the Lothians especially, owe so much, who lived quite near. These were men who were independent in thought and action; and though nearly all high Tories, they were not so at the laird's bidding by any means; for in a great majority of cases they were more independent in their

circumstances than their landlords. Then there were several old families—lords, and baronets, and squires of ancient lineage, who lived near at hand. In the village itself there were the various partners of the public work, several of whom resided in the place ; and a few tradespeople, who were of the gentleman-farmer class ; the ministers, the doctors, for though the village did not patronize the last of the learned professions—the law, it made amends by having a double supply of divinity and physic, who helped greatly to bring the higher strata of the community into contact with the lower.

Eyelinn was a very convivial place, and tea and toddy drinkings were quite the order of the day—the one following the other assuredly as night follows day. It was the custom of the time almost universally all over Scotland. In the estimation of the people Eyelinn was a

jolly little place, having, perhaps, as many hard drinkers as could be found in any two places of its size, more drinking parties than, perhaps, even a Fife borough, and well-nigh as large a proportion of the kindred vices and immoralities among high and low.

The school to which I was first sent was kept by a woman, of whom I remember little more than the name. She must have been a widow, for I fancy she was called Viddy or Widow Congleton, and taught little boys their letters, and girls sewing, and various other arts. I remember I had not long before been put, to my great delight, into more masculine garments than I had before worn, when I was sent to another school along with an elder sister, which a young man studying for the Church had opened in opposition to the parish schoolmaster, who, having some skill in land surveying, devoted more

time to it than to his pupils—at least, the parents thought so. I remember well—what made it wonderful I do not know—that the bigger boys made quite a wonder of me. It was the season for playing bouls (marbles), and I remember well I came home with all my pockets full, having got one for every question I could answer, of which I was very proud—of the marbles, I mean ; I daresay I was proud also of the praise which I had gotten from the teacher for being able to read—it must have been mere chance work—several long lines of figures, hundreds of millions and downwards, without a mistake.

Of course it is nonsense in me to think that the like of these childish remembrances can interest people now-a-days, so I shall cut them as short as possible. Our village possessed and practised the usual school-games, but, so far as I remember, two of these were greater



favourites in it than I have ever seen elsewhere; and, singularly enough, these were the very games which Tom Brown has so graphically described in his schooldays at Rugby. Rather curious, I fancy, this coincidence between the aristocratic English school and the very lowly Lowland Scottish village, but it is fact nevertheless. Hounds and hare, true steeple-chase running, such as he describes, only none of our champions, our captains, or their subalterns, ever thought of taking refuge in an ale-house afterwards, and the very smallest of small-beer was an unknown dainty to those whose bawbees were very scarce indeed.

But the game of all others most relished and most keenly contested was football, the true Borderer's game, which may perhaps account for the love for and interest taken in it by all, young and old. So hotly did the

opponents contend, that I remember on one occasion a boy having his leg broken and being lamed for life in a school-engagement ; and broken heads and shins, and severe contusions, and other mishaps, were as plentiful as possible.

Apropos of football, it was a thoroughly village game. Fastern's Eve—Shrove Tuesday—was a great day with all the people in the village of Eyelinn. People had visits from their friends, as a matter of course ; it was something in this respect like the feasts in the north of England. The standing dishes at these feasts were “fitless cocks and dump-
lings”—not the southern preparation at all, but a much more humble and homely manipulation of the dough. I really do not very distinctly remember what these dainties were, but I fancy that the “fitless cocks” were a somewhat less artistic preparation than the pan-

cake, and the dumpling just a yeast dumpling of the usual sort.

These were the substantials; the liquids were of course whisky in various combinations, and in far more than proportionate quantity. But the most exciting, and most eagerly looked-for part of the day's amusements was the game of football out of doors, which was from time immemorial played by the men of the village, the married against the single, and the ball had to be driven from one end of the place to the other.

Across the lower and widest part of the street there flowed a small burn, across which was a little bridge, which led to the kirk and country; all the rest of the rivulet's course was open, in front of the houses at the end of the street. This burn, the boys days before had been preparing for the coming struggle, by damming it up, and by every means en-

deavouring to increase the quantity of water. Strange that so much malice should enter into all our efforts after amusement. The ball must be driven across this dam to the houses beyond before the game could be won, and hence the object of the collected water, to afford to the spectators the spectacle of a dozen or two men up to their waists in the puddle after the ball. So ill-natured are even well-disposed people, and so ready to be amused with horse-play, that this was the part of all the struggle which was most relished. There was little wonder that we schoolboys should seek to distinguish ourselves at this game, with the example of our elders thus set before us.

Since then, I remember one bitter New Year's morning being in Dumfriesshire close to the Debatable Sand, coming upon a large party of men striving lustily at football in a

haugh on Kirtle side, near Kirkconnel, with their landlord, an ancient baronet, no less in full swing as their leader.

Eyelinn was a port, as it is called in the East country—that is, the reapers from Ireland and the Highlands assembled in it, on the Monday morning during the harvest, and the farmers came in from the district around to hire them. It will most likely be greatly changed now, but I remember many strange, scenes and dreadful quarrels among the reapers. Of course a contest between Highlanders and Irishmen was very much like the meeting of Greek with Greek, but the country people always took the part of their countrymen—Waterloo was of such fresh renown among them at the time, and the fame of the Highland regiments national property, that the hearts of all warmed to the “harsher features, and the mean more grave,”

of those dwellers among the hills. Heads were often broken, and blood spilt; for excited men and fiery women, with such dangerous weapons in their hands as sickles are, were not to be trusted, and they did not always lay them aside when they felt their tempers rising. So afraid were the magistrates of these Monday mornings, that very often a troop of dragoons was sent out from Edinburgh to keep the peace. I was too young to know whether such precautions were really necessary; I rather think half a dozen county policemen would do the duty better now-a-days; but in those old Tory times, the readiest and the roughest means were generally used, and repression, not prevention, was the order of the day. Bonnymuir was not so far distant either, and a display of military force even in Eyelinn, where politics were nearly all on one side, might be supposed to have its advantages.

It was on one of these bustling Monday mornings, in the month of August, that I left Eyelinn for good, I being then a boy of some eight years old. I remember I was so proud of wearing my best jacket, and being about to become a traveller, that I gave my bosom friend, Willie Watt, the cut direct, when I met him opposite the post-office, while going round the town for the last time. I must confess that my conscience has often accused me for doing that same evil action, and even while I write this it is reproaching me ; I will not say it is the oldest thing my conscience calls up, but certainly it is one of them.

CHAPTER II.

PERHAPS I ought to have said something about my parents before this. Very likely, but what I have to say about them just now will come in better here than it would have done before. They were decent respectable people, though by no means in wealthy circumstances. Wealth is, however, so much a thing of comparison, that I do not know what is the proper criterion by which to test what it is, and what it is not ; and certainly even worldly comfort does not nearly so much depend upon mere money as people at this day seem to think. Of this I am sure, that I

have seen more comfort and greater respectability maintained where the income was very moderate indeed, than where it was twice or even three times as great, and where the nominal rank of people was the same too.

My father was, so far as I remember, a man of middle height, and proportionally stout. He used to dress, up to the time we left the village of Eyelinn, in the old fashion of breeches and gaiters, and had, on the whole, a substantial and well-to-do appearance. Nor did the appearance belie the reality; he was a comfortable man, and came out of a comfortable home, where all was maintained in respectability on the very small income of ninety pounds a year, from which even there were deductions neither few nor small.

One can't help wondering now-a-days how families of this class could be so respectably

lodged, clothed, fed, and educated on such a pittance, and be able to keep up a fair appearance in the world, as our family and others of the same class did? Of course there must have been great frugality, and the exercise of much careful economy, to make the expenditure keep within the income. Yet, of this I am sure, that, at no time in my life, though it has been passed in manifold places, and amid varying circumstances, did I ever see more of real comfort, and enjoy a better home than at that time, and during the remainder of my schoolboy days. This remark brings me to the true household ruler, whose eye was ever provident, whose hand was ever careful, without, in any case, being mean.

My mother was altogether a very superior person ; not so much so, perhaps, from education as from natural mental ability. Though



her whole life had been a succession of trials —perhaps because it had been so—and both while unmarried and married, she had had a continual struggle to maintain against poverty, she had managed to keep abreast, fully better than most people, with the growing intelligence of the age. Just before we had left Eyelinn, she had lost two children, both younger than myself, of which great sorrow I have hardly the shadow of a recollection, though I distinctly remember events which one would imagine should not have made so deep and lasting an impression. These losses had struck very hardly and heavily upon my mother ; and she felt them, perhaps, all the more, now that she was compelled to say that she had now no interest in Eyelinn, save in a grave in its quiet churchyard. Well do I remember, however, how keen were her feelings when any of us came upon the play-

things of the lost bairns, and, as children will do, would ask her for them ; and how amazed and awed we used to be at the bursts of grief which would overcome her, and the reverent way she would take them from our hands and carefully lock them away out of our sight.

I cannot say certainly whether this great sorrow exercised a lasting influence on her demeanour, but I rather think it did ; not that she was always sad or mournful, by no means, but I fancy she thought more ; and while engaged in the business of the household, or in intercourse with the neighbours, she carried for years the memory of her lost little ones in her heart.

I fancy that there never was a truer saying than this—*Poeta nascitur, non fit* ; any way, whether my mother's children are poets or not—and for myself I entirely disclaim the



lofty title—certain it is that the desire, if not the power, of writing, has fallen upon us all, and as surely it comes to us through her. I believe her mother, my grandmother, to have been one of those unheard of “makers” a century ago, whose sweet lyrics may yet be heard in Scotland wedded to old music, but whose names were never known beyond the bounds of their native districts.

My mother herself was not a poet, not even a poetaster, but she did write most graphic letters, and, where there was need, most nervous and energetic ones. She was the spring whence her children took their inspiration. She possessed quite a fund of anecdote and story, and from my very earliest years used to delight her bairns by narrating to them stories of persons, customs, and habits of the olden time, which would be like found treasures to Dean Ramsay.

Her memory was most retentive, and she possessed that faculty, by no means common, of seizing only upon those incidents which were really worth remembering; for even now her old world stories, and the minute traits of character which she set before us so picturesquely, are as fresh in my memory as if they had been related yesterday; and there was no surplusage or verbiage about them, but every incident as clear and distinct and telling as they could well be. She was indeed a "maker" in mind, though the afflatus never found outlet in music.

All my youthful days, though we children saw nothing of it, were days of struggle and suffering to her—struggles with poverty constant and unremitting—struggles with other evils, which, I fear much, my mother regarded as much more difficult to strive against than poverty.

It was no light matter, even with the advantages my people possessed, to feed and clothe and educate properly such a family as ours, on an income so limited ; but that had to be done, and was done, so far as I can judge. I do not mean to say that any of us received a thorough education—I don't think thorough education was then known in Scotland, at least in our rank in life, or is even yet—but we were no whit behind our neighbours, and were fitted for the future employments we were to adopt quite as well as the children of parents who held a much higher position in the world than ours. This was accomplished only by making considerable sacrifices, which, I fear, none of my brothers or sisters ever sufficiently realised in after life.

It is very strange how vividly—since I have taken the pen in hand—old incidents,

which I have not thought of for better than forty years, come back into my mind, and how well I can now understand the bearings of certain events which happened then, which certainly were not at the time pleasurable to any of us, but still it puzzled us greatly to know why or how they were so annoying to our mother. Now I can see that the expense they entailed was at the bottom of much of that annoyance, or perhaps it might be the almost entire inability to meet the extra charges which we boys brought upon her by our folly and carelessness, in the way of losing books, &c. The outlay of every penny had to be carefully considered, even in the best of circumstances, and I fear we did not think much of the unstretchable income in our heedlessness and boisterous mirth.

The proverb says there is a skeleton in every house, and our house, I fear, was no

exception to the saw. A very common thing, which at that time in that country was very little thought of, was the secret thorn in my mother's life. The vice, which was the standing trouble of the house, was indeed almost the most usual thing possible among our class of people, and so was very little thought of; if regarded as a blemish in their character at all, it was more as a weakness than a vice.

It was quite a matter of course that there should be hard drinking on all extraordinary occasions, and the usage of strong potions a daily habit. There ought, therefore, to have been little wonder manifested when people crossed the line—if any line can be drawn where strong drink is used, within which there is assured safety. The hardest trials, I have now little doubt, to which a sensitive woman can be exposed, must flow from the fact of her partner indulging in drink, and

consequently lapsing into excess and positive drunkenness. It is the most despicable of all vices, and causes the most miserable of all schemes to be resorted to to conceal from neighbours and friends that the husband and father, who should be the pattern of the moral virtues to his children and dependents, is in a state in which he is unfitted not only for the higher, but for the performance of any of the duties of his station. I have noted in my time the many desperate shifts to which recourse has been had to conceal the wretched condition into which some dear one has fallen; and this experience has thrown much light on many things in my early home life, which I should not have otherwise understood. For this was the vice which aggravated and wounded my mother so keenly, and which she thought must be concealed at any cost; and he who should have been the guide of our

young feet in the ways of right and purity it was whose state and habits were to be hidden closely from the eyes of strangers, and screened by hundreds of pitiful devices from the observation of even his own children, if that could possibly be accomplished. No wonder, then, that the struggle with poverty, hard as it was, and harder as it was made by the existence of this vile habit, should, in comparison, have been considered light beside this master vice.

There were four of us children—two girls and two boys—one sister the elder born of the family, the other the youngest of us all; and coming as she did at a considerable interval, and filling the place left vacant by the children who had been cut off, she was the very joy and delight of us all, so long as we were at home—what she was to my mother I dare not trust myself to say. But we,

the elder children, could never make enough of little Susie, and she was most decidedly the most important personage that had ever been in our humble household. My brother and myself doted on her; and when at home from school, and afterwards when we had gone out into the world, and at times came back to see the people at home, she was our constant companion and most despotic ruler.

The rest of us were commonplace ordinary enough bairns. My older sister, early initiated into the cares and mysteries of the household, was very helpful to my mother, and very matronly and careful of us her juniors by a few years; but she was a sedate, quiet, home-keeping, and home-loving girl, and the only one of us who, in those early times, shared in my mother's cares, and struggles, and sorrows. Strange, we, all of us, were

welcome and invited to participate in the joys ; but the sorrows, the trials, we were as heedfully kept out of. My brother Alec and myself were just like other country boys of our years, a little better trained and guided at home, perhaps, and for a time kept at a better school than the children of our nearest neighbours, but wild and stirring as any of them. Quite ready to climb the trees, to steal the pears and apples in the old orchard, or to break the fences and provoke the ground officer during our bird-nesting and bramble-gathering excursions.

A great change for the worse has come over our young people, as it seems to me, since those times. It was almost an article of faith with us that harrying nests was a grievous sin, that taking away the eggs or young from the parent birds was an act of great cruelty ; and I do not believe either my brother or

myself was ever guilty of doing such a thing. Now-a-days, science has been so dreadfully popularised, that what we were taught to think was quite unjustifiable, is held to be a meritorious act ; and the poor innocent hedge-sparrow, or the shilfa—the chaffinch—is mercilessly despoiled by the budding philosophers, under the sanction of its long-suffering name. We were taught otherwise, and, though wild enough, were not cruel. There was nothing, however, very particular about any of us ; and both Sandy and myself were just as heedless and as foolish as any country boys could well be.

CHAPTER III.

WE had come to a hamlet just within the boundary of East Lothian, lying between the old battle-fields of Pinkie and Prestonpans, and not very far from the collier village or town of Tranent. Our new abode was a very lonely one, a farm-house once of some note, but now fallen from its high estate, and tenanted by two families; while the old stables, bins, and offices had been turned into granaries by the proprietor. Round about on every side there were coal-pits new and old, in present operation, and closed long years ago. But the upper seam of coal, the only one worked, was nearly wrought



out, and before we had lived long at the mains, the pits were all dismantled, and the collier population dispersed, driven away sometimes by the very summary process of unroofing their houses, when they did not feel disposed to depart at once.

It was a great comfort to my parents, for they feared the contamination of their children by association with the collier bairns, who certainly were as rude and uncouth imps as one would wish to see; and, in another way, it was an advantage, for the colliers had small regard to the principle of *meum* and *tuum*, and very freely helped themselves to what they saw their neighbours had, which they themselves lacked. The produce of our gardens, our fruit-trees, the hens and chickens, or the stray shirts, or other garments hung out to dry, all were so many desirable things to the colliers, and all more so less quickly disap-

peared. And it need not have been wondered at, for that generation of the collier race had been born, if not in serfdom, at least only one remove from that state, and education of any kind was in the lowest possible condition among them.

It was a very grand site on which our very humble house stood, for we could see over all the beautiful country to the foot of the Pentland Hills, and all round to the sea, taking in Arthur's Seat, the columns on the Calton Hill, then being set up with great parade and ostentation, and the shores of Fife. An ugly engine-house stood, it is true, close at hand in the foreground, but we soon learned to ignore that. Then behind us, on the hill-side, stood the Castle of Fa-side, the history of which I never could learn anything at all of; but there it stood, between us and the southern sky, in remarkably good preser-

vation, with all the angles still clear and distinct about its corners, and presenting a gaunt and ghostly spectacle to us. There were plenty of trees about us, and the old unoccupied manor-house, which was as dull and commonplace as houses of a hundred and forty years ago generally are. We were in the very middle of fields in the highest state of cultivation, but, thanks to the consequence of the ancient house, or to the taste of its early proprietors, there were plenty of trees to give beauty and variety to the landscape. The Santer Road passed quite near, and connected us easily with the market-town of Dalkeith; while not very far off ran the great London Road, which gave us ready access to the towns of Edinburgh and Haddington; so that, though our house was a lonely one, and lay near to a nameless hamlet, our people were not, by any means, so very

much out of the world after all. Its greatest want was the means of education for us youngsters; the only school near was one maintained for the children of the colliers and hinds, where were taught, in a very perfunctory way, the three simple elements, and nothing else. It is true, there were good schools within a few miles, the daily journeys to which formed the happiest reminiscence that I retain of that most happy time.

But our people tried us at the school which was most convenient first; from which, after a time, I, having been so culpable as to know more about some one thing than the master, and so presumptuous as to make the fact known, was ignominiously expelled in a fit of wrath, very much to my own delight, and my brother and myself sent to school in the nearest town.

It was some two or three miles off, and the

hours of attendance would make a modern pupil, or teacher either, stare. Yet, though we were required to be in school by seven o'clock in the morning, and, with two intervals, were kept at work till five in the afternoon, I do not think any one of the pupils grumbled; certainly, we did not. I cannot say that the early hours we were compelled to keep had any beneficial effect on me, in so far as early rising was concerned. I rather fancy that, if we are to judge by the habits of the life that followed, it must have disgusted rather than made me enamoured with it. However, it is a fact that I greatly enjoyed the early morning walk to school, and can yet remember, as clearly as may be, the sensations of delight with which I, along with my brother Sandy, used to hail the various scenes which in these blissful summer mornings opened out successively before us,

well acquainted with them as we were.

I remember, as vividly as if I had seen it yesterday, instead of its being fully thirty years ago, one particular view of the Firth which invariably delighted me as we came round a corner of the road. It never was varied by life or moving object, save at a chance time, and very rarely by the sight of an anchored sloop or passing boat ; but the sea was ever fresh, living, and new, and this particular glimpse never palled on our taste, nor wearied nor ceased to interest us, though seen every day for years. And albeit those waters of the Forth are so lonely and deserted when compared with the Clyde, the Mersey, or the Thames, it is a magnificent sight, and most lovely in my eyes yet are the blue waters of the Firth, with its islands standing boldly out, and the long romantic town-fringed shores of Fife, hemming in the prospect with, it may

be, the white gleam of the sail of a Baltic trader, the smoky trail of a London steamer, or the brown lugsail of a Newhaven or Buckhaven fishing-boat, to give life and animation to it.

I don't know fully what effect my early life in this beautiful country has had upon me, unless it has been to give me a great love for the sea, and the things of the sea, which time has only intensified, from what I found out after I was becoming grey, and went to sojourn for a time amid the wild islands of the western seas, where my first impression of those famous scenes of ocean and mountain, which people come from all the world to see, was one of positive pain and disappointment. The bare hills, the treeless glens, and sombre stretches of bare, naked crags, positively distressed me; and all, I fancy, from the fact that my eye had been educated amid such

scenes of sea and land as can be seen in Lothian, and that my idea of what was beautiful in scenery was formed from the type there existing.

Errol, the country town in which the school to which we were to go was situated, was a pretty, and rather a celebrated place in the literary annals of the country. Even then one could, by a little hunting, have found two or three, or perhaps more, live authors, men of mark, too, in their time ; and now I suppose their name is legion, though their fame is vastly smaller. The town stands on the banks of the Errol, which divides it into two parts. One of these had all the broken-down and dissipated look which a small seaport and fishing village generally wears, though, at the same time, possessing several good streets, and a rather stylish neighbourhood.

The harbour was only busy for a short time in summer, when some few vessels from the Baltic, and timber brigs from North America, discharged their cargoes there. Fishing was the principal employment of the people, and the long line of drave boats drawn up high and dry, the chief things to be seen about its shores. Of course they must have gone out to fish sometimes, and these great boats would most likely go to Caithness at the herring season ; but I never remember to have passed along the very odorous back street, when the line of hauled up boats was broken, or seen any bustle of consequence about the harbour, of which fish was the cause. It is needless to say that public-houses abounded, as these and the boats, and amphibious-looking creatures of bairns, were the principal things to be seen in all our Firth of Forth fishing towns.

Errol proper, on the other side of the bridge, was a far better built and better kept place, and much more aristocratic, in its way quite so. It was the residence of many people of good family, not always poor, though very often not rich. It was a favourite place with retired naval and military men, and Indian officers of all branches of the service, who had not made fortunes in India. Besides, many of the Edinburgh dignitaries, lords of session, and others, had here their residences—and altogether it had a character of intellect, which small towns do not commonly possess. But its schools, being, besides, what I have to do with just now, were perhaps its chief attractions.

Errol was famous for its schools; though not a borough, nor even a market-town, it yet rejoiced in a grammar-school of old foundation, a semi-public institution in these latter

times ; and there were various boarding establishments in addition, some of them very rigid and exclusive, for the young people of both sexes and of all ranks.

Perhaps as a consequence of this, perhaps because there were so many people of the higher classes, perhaps because of the character of the teacher, it may be from all these causes combined, the parish school had degenerated, and become one of the poorest and lowest in Scotland. It was looked upon almost as a charity school, in fact, to which no children save those of the very lowest class could be sent.

Thus it came to pass that, notwithstanding schools abounded, parents such as mine had greater difficulty than usual in finding one quite suitable for their children and their means. This had become a felt want, however, and at last became so clamant, that a

school was established in opposition to the grammar-school on the one hand, and the parish one on the other ; and a teacher was procured, who, possessing higher scholastic attainments than usual, was yet content to be restricted as to the fees charged, and the boarders he should take. It was to this new school that my brother and myself were to be sent.

There might be, for anything I know to the contrary, as many theories current then about education as there is at present, but if so, there was far less said about them, at least among people of our class.

Mr. McDonald, our teacher, did not depart much from the ordinary method of persuading boys to learn, but he did differ in some respects, and I cannot help thinking that he must have had a greater moral power over his scholars than was usual with his class.

Of one thing I am sure, that going to his school has left a pleasant impression on my memory, and it seems to me that we boys learned [quickly under him more from the principle of love than fear.

But his notions of what were proper hours for attendance at school was dreadful—seven and eight hours a-day in school, and having no end of lessons to commit to memory or prepare at home besides. What would people say to that now-a-days? Yet we boys did not grumble; we did far better—we worked hard, and, so far as I can judge, made good progress under him.

Perhaps our liking for our school and teacher was not lessened by the fact that Mr. McDonald heartily encouraged us in our games. Our school had been built originally for an assembly or ball-room, and there were various rooms connected with the larger

hall, which was the school proper. One of these places was given up to us for the reception of our shintas, balls, and whatever other implements were necessary for the games we played. Our teacher did not join us ; he had too great an idea of the awful rule and right authority of his position for that ; but he was frequently an onlooker, and we did all the better, both in the school and out of it, from the fact that we had his sympathy and encouragement in our out-door exercises. In those days it was a rare, if not an unprecedented thing altogether, for teachers to take such a degree of interest in the boys, and the introduction of playthings into the school-room was regarded as a crime ; perhaps the change in this respect also helped to increase our liking for our teacher.

Then a spirit of honour, a love of fair play, was earnestly inculcated, and the boys learned

to fear disgrace far more than bodily punishment. In grave cases the delinquents were regularly tried by a jury of their schoolfellows; and, Mr. McDonald himself being judge, the whole of the evidence on both sides having been duly weighed, and the verdict returned, the sentence passed was looked upon with great respect, and it must be said also with a good deal of awe. Few boys brought once before this tribunal were desirous of figuring at its bar a second time; and hence the school was most orderly, the scholars docile and obedient in school hours, while bold, hearty, and vigorous out of doors, and distinguished by a manliness which was far from common among the scholars in Errol.

CHAPTER IV.

“BAIRNS, ye’re to gang to the new school at Errol on Monday.”

So my mother addressed Sandy and me one evening when she returned from a visit to the town. I had been expelled some few weeks before from the Collier school across the road in our own village, and Sandy had been withdrawn in consequence. We had been kept at home, somewhat to my amusement, for reasons which I did not know then ; but I fancy they must have been pecuniary ones—for the payment of a half-guinea fee for each of us, to say nothing of entrance-money and new

books, was a thing not at all times possible in our household, and at that time less than ever, because of a serious loss which had been sustained.

“Whatna schule, mother?” my brother Sandy asked.

“It’s a new one in the Pond,” my elder sister Menie answered, for she had been in the town with my mother, and was very much inclined to be patronising towards us. “Eh, Steenie, ye’ll hae to learn hard yonder; ye’ll no get leave to play wi’ yon maister.”

“Ay, Steenie, it’s quite true; the new teacher’s no like Mr. Brown; he teaches everything, and has the look of a man who, when he says a thing, maun hae it dune off-hand,” my mother said.

“I dinna want to play wi’ the maister,” I said, somewhat sulkily, I fear; “I didna play wi’ Brown, and I couldna help kennin’ what

he didna—ye shouldna blame me that way aye.”

“Naeboddy’s blaming you, laddie,” my mother answered. “I’m only telling you, Steenie, what I thought of the new teacher.”

I should say that our own people always called me Steenie, though it was not the proper diminutive of my name; but I had resisted so desperately any name that could be manufactured out of Andrew, being determined “no to be made a fuil o’,” that they had adopted Steenie.

“But, mother, what do you want me—what’ll I hae to learn?” I asked.

“I dinna ken a’ what, but Mr. McDonald gets a high character, and ye’ll just have to learn what the other boys do,” she answered.

“There’s no a common boy in the school,” my sister said; “they’re a’ gentlemen’s sons,

every one; there's no a Geordie Bisset, Sandy, nor a Michael Henderson either, among them a'."

"Will they be ony the better o' that, I would like to ken?" Sandy cried, very indignantly; "and what guid'll it do me or Steenie that the scholars are a' gentlemen's sons?"

"Oh! you're a puir-spirited chield, Sandy!" my sister cried. "Is't no a hantle better to be amang big folk's bairns than wi' cotters', and will it no do ye a heap o' mair guid?"

"I dinna ken, and I dinna believe it will," Sandy answered sturdily; "but I'm gey'an sure there'll no be a cleverer chield in the schule than Michael, nor a better one than Geordie, for a' ye say, Menie."

"But can ye no tell what we'll hae to learn, mother, or whatever books we'll hae to read?" I asked again.

“No, Steenie. You’ll just do as the rest does, and—” my mother sighed and shook her head—the idea of further outlay troubled her considerably—“Mr. McDonald will gie you whatever books you may need.”

“But it’ll be very funny to gang to the school without books, will it no, mother?” I persisted.

“No, no, laddie; I’ll gang down wi’ you mysel’,” was the answer, “and see about a’ that. Now, Steenie, it’s likely to be your last school, so ye maun be a guid bairn, and a guid scholar, and learn as muckle and as fast as ye can. Ye’ll no be muckle longer at the school now; ye’ll hae to gang and learn a business sune.”

“I could gang the morn, mother, if you were pleased!” I cried.

“I daresay ye could, and do no that ill either; but ye’ll be a’ the better o’ a while

langer's schuling before ye gang ; but mind ye maun do as muckle as ye can this time, Steenie, my man."

My mother spoke seriously, and drew me towards her as she spoke. She was very little given to the outward display of her affection, so that the little caressing motion affected me very greatly ; and I was just about to protest vehemently how I should learn, and I felt my eyes full of tears, when Sandy broke in.

"Is't a big schule ?—are there mony boys in't ?"

"It's quite a new one, bairns, and the teacher has a high name ; a' the Errol folk speak favourably of him. But, laddies, he makes the scholars work hard ; ye'll hae to start very early in the morning, and be away till night. It's a new plan of the master's ain."

“Ay, Steenie, ye’re to be down there at Errol by seven in the mornin’,” my sister Menie said. “How do ye think ye’ll like that?”

“Whisht! whisht!” my mother said; “the laddies’ll have to leave here at six, to be in the school in good time a’ the summer; but it’s a grand thing to rise in the morning.”

“It’s the early bird that catches the worm, ye ken, Steenie,” Menie continued, laughing; for I fear it must be confessed my character for early rising was only indifferent.

“How’ll we ever do for our breakfast, mother?” Sandy asked.

“That’ll be managed a’ right, no fear. Ye dinna think I want ye to live on what ye learn at the schule, Sandy, my man, do ye?” my mother asked him.

“No, and it would be unco puir meat, mother—but how’ll we do for a’ that?”

“Never you mind ; we’ll manage a’ that on Monday. I dinna think, Sandy, lad, ye could help me muckle, could ye? But awa’ to your play now, while ye may and can.”

My brother and myself were thus dismissed ; and we went away, I recollect, well nigh as proud as possible in every respect. Sandy, notwithstanding his predilection for Geordie Bisset and Michael Henderson, sons of neighbouring peasant householders, was very great about the idea that our future schoolfellows were to be the sons of gentlefolk. We had always been brought up greatly superior to the children around us ; and, though there was by no means such a mighty difference, in a pecuniary point of view, between our people and those who lived around us, there was yet a vast difference in the manners of the house-

holds and in the breeding of us children.

The great ambition of the Scottish peasantry at that time was to educate a son for the ministry, and the other children were allowed to remain just as their fathers had been, ploughmen or tradesmen, as the case might be, that the favoured one should be pushed on. The rest of the family, as to speak, were kept stationary, that one might be advanced and “wag his pow in a poopit,” as the vulgar phrase went. This was not my mother’s ambition; she was ambitious for us too, but her ambition took the direction of the advancement of the whole of us. Therefore we were to be educated as well as possible, and, at any rate, to begin life one step higher up the ladder than my father had started from. If we could advance, so much the better, that was our own work; hers was to put us fairly on the road, ours to accomplish the work. Doubt-

less her ideas of advancement were very different from those which we afterwards arrived at ; but being impressed with the idea of progression, and set agoing according to that principle, we were started rightly at least.

It may be imagined how bigly my brother Sandy and I spoke about our new school to our companions that night. There was a sort of mystery about it, too, which was quite delightful, and permitted as to draw the long bow as boldly as we pleased, and to tell of unheard things, which we were to learn, as we thought fit. Brown, who had ejected me from his school, only taught the merest rudiments of education. He had been brought from the loom to teach the collier children, and was retained by the proprietor after the colliers went away, to keep the children of the hinds out of mischief more than anything else. Oh !

how we gloried over him now, and ridiculed him, as we boasted of the school to which we were going, and of the new master who was so learned, and at last roused the angry passions of the boys, Sandy's special friends, so much, that they finished the controversy by thrashing him soundly for his boasting of the gentlemen's sons who were to be his new comrades. The boys could stand as much as we pleased to say to them about Brown, but they would not stand the gentlemen's sons at all.

CHAPTER V.

ON the Monday Sandy and I went to the new school. We had a walk of about three miles before we reached Errol, but the road was familiar and pleasant. My mother went with us. My father never meddled with such things at all—indeed, I don't very well remember what family affairs he took any special concern in, unless it was just his daily work, and bringing home the money once a quarter, when he was paid. I never could understand why it was that the fathers of my companions took so much trouble, and were so potential with their children. I used to set it

down to some want of capacity in the mothers, or that they were not to be trusted. My mother was the true head of our household in all such things, and what she did she did well. So it was she that took Sandy and me to school, and made all the arrangements necessary for us, without my father being troubled about the matter, or even seeing Mr. McDonald at all, either before or after we had joined his school.

Errol was our market town, and my mother, after leaving us at school, went away to visit the shops she dealt with, and to pay visits to her acquaintances, purposing to wait and take us home with her when the school was dismissed. We were quite strange to the school, and to the class of scholars there gathered. Both of us were placed on the lowest form in the lowest class, till our acquirements could be known.

The school-room was a large, lofty hall, of very good proportions, I remember, and was entered by an outside stair from the back. It had been built for a ball-room, and there were two or three chandeliers pendent from the lofty ceiling—for as yet Errol was innocent of gas. This room was filled with desks, all facing the top of the room, where, between two large windows, the throne of the master was placed. The latter was a fixture, and did duty on Sundays as a pulpit, for the school was the place where a Baptist congregation met on that day. From the master's desk, which was raised on an elevated dais or platform, he could see every boy in the school-room, whether he was idling or working ; and the boys seemed to feel this, and there was less by-play among them than I ever remembered to have seen before.

After Sandy and myself had taken our

ments the lessons went on again, but it was a long while before we were asking anything so I had time to note inwardly the master, and the scholars, and the room. The assistant was absent for the time, so that I had more leisure for observation, the master having all the work to do himself. Of course the boys engaged most of our attention.

Having been for so many years almost entirely secluded in the country, I was rather curious about these gentlemen's sons my sister Menie had spoken so much about; and I must say that I felt greatly disappointed with the appearance of the boys around me. They did not look a bit better than the boys I had been accustomed to associate with, nor very much better dressed. Certainly I could hear that the upper classes were busy with a Latin lesson, which language I had not heard since I left the school at Eyelinn; and by-and-by I

saw Sandy prick his ears—he was a better Latin scholar, though younger than I—at some false quantity or other easily-noticed blunder ; and then, when another blunder occurred—how it came about I could never find out, but Mr. McDonald called on him to set them right, which he did, to my great delight, and the no small astonishment of the seniors, and of the master also, I fancied. So Sandy was at once called up to the front, and put into the class. Such a jump over half a dozen forms of older boys made the scholars open their eyes ; and then my turn came in another department, and I also was advanced to the senior class, thus completing their amazement at being beaten by “twa country cuts.” For these boys had been mostly trained in the grammar school, from which this new one was a split, and we were only country youths.

However, I do not think that even at the

first these lads were prejudiced against us. Nor do I think we had to defend out of doors the position we had thus early acquired within; I rather think both Sandy and myself had battles enough to fight and thrashings enough to receive from other causes, but I do not think this was one of them. In a short time we were to become rather popular in the school than otherwise; and big Ramsay, and little Ramsay, as we were called—there were altogether three of the name, the latter for distinction called the doctor, because his father was an apothecary—it was very soon found, could do good turns to their comrades in ways which bound the other boys to them.

Before we left the school that afternoon, we had a supply of books given to us of the kinds in use in the school, which, according to usual custom, were books we had never seen before, and which, moreover, were used in no



other school in the neighbourhood. Most likely, if we had had shortly to go to another place, we should have found them useless. I have often wondered how it comes about that such a nuisance as this school-book one is tolerated. I believe one could gather a cart-load easily enough for any given period of advancement, of any given pupil, all meant to do the same thing, yet all differing, the one from the other, so much, that they are quite useless—unless in special schools which patronize them severably. One reads of strikes among the handicraftsmen to obtain the redress of real or imaginary grievances, and I have often wondered that the parents of a town do not combine, and resist the introduction of such an endless variety of books; or rather why they do not unite and put down the nuisance which already exists. Certain it is that parents make plenty of work

at home, and in conversation, about it, and grumble dreadfully when they find that this book, which was new half a year ago at the academy, and is as good as new now, will not suit at the new academy at all, and another must be got, and so it is with almost every branch of study. I wonder if a parents' union could not redress this grievance. I wonder they do not try it, any way. I speak quite disinterestedly, seeing that I have no young hopefuls to educate now ; but I wonder that those who have, submit to be victimized so mercilessly and so needlessly. Of course the youngsters are pleased with new books, but that is no good reason why such an expensive and absurd system should be allowed to exist.

We rejoiced in our new books. They marked the new era to us. Indeed those we had formerly used were so much worn, and

so far behind the time, that there was need for an entire change ; but I well remember how anxious my mother looked when we went to the friend's where she was with the load. Paying for our schooling had been a difficult matter enough without this extra charge. Sandy and myself were well pleased, however, and we returned home quite delighted with the new school, the new teacher, and no less with the books, and gave ourselves greater airs than we had ever done before, as we marched along before my mother up the road and through the plantation towards our house. I do believe our old comrades at Brown's were more aggravated by the sight of us returning this day with such a number of books, and at the airs we assumed in consequence, than with all our vapouring about gentlefolk's sons of the night before. I had no idea of angering them, neither had Sandy, nor were

we disposed to boast any longer of our gentlemanly schoolfellows. We had discovered that the parents of some of them were not more respectable than our own, nor a great deal richer ; and though, to country boys, a shopkeeper in a town is the very *beau-ideal* of a rich man, yet, somehow, the sons of a recruiting sergeant, and of various keepers of public-houses, did not seem so very much superior to our old homely comrades.



CHAPTER VI.

I REMEMBER one of the very first times I was in Edinburgh, when I was a very little boy, in fact, and long before I could think anything about the beauty of the city, seeing a scene in the very centre of the town, which both interested and alarmed me very much. It was neither more nor less than a bickering match—a fight between two parties of youths and boys, in which stones were the weapons of war.

In those days there was an open field called, if I remember rightly, Barefoot's Park, lying between the Bank of Scotland and Princes



Street, now East Princes Street Gardens. Well, this large open space was the theatre of operations, and a fierce fight was raging between the boys of the Old and the New Towns.

I cannot remember whether it was a school-fight or a faction fight, but it was fiercely contested, and the opponents fought desperately, struggling hither and thither, and swaying from side to side of the field, as the different parties prevailed, just as one can imagine may happen in real warfare. I do not know how the battle ended, but such fights were not at all uncommon, and, as it seems to me, were very nearly peculiar to Edinburgh and its neighbourhood.

Whether we at Errol were merely imitators of the Edinburgh boys, or took it up at our own hand, I cannot say, but it is certain that such contests, such bickerings, were

very usual things with us, and the hostile parties were the boys of the various schools. The river Errol, being here almost an estuary, is very much broader in proportion than it is deep; and the wide bed, save at the very rare intervals of extraordinary spring-tides, is more than three-fourths of its width filled with dry beds of shingle, affording an arena for our battles, and an inexhaustible supply of ammunition to the rival schools.

The river itself formed a limit beyond which the belligerents hesitated to pass, at least for a very long time. Like modern wars, these were entirely artillery battles at first, and for a long time not a great deal of harm was done, the shots being generally pretty well spent before they reached the enemy, or our heads being so hard in those days that the missiles had little effect—I hardly know which.



Shortly after Sandy and myself went to Mr. McDonald's school, however, the war began to be carried on with greater bitterness; and long shots, however well-aimed, would no longer do—our side longed to come to closer quarters, and to test the efficacy of a charge and fight hand-to-hand. We had had a trial of strength with every one of the schools in Errol, and had been left in every case in possession of the battle-field, when one day we were assaulted fiercely by the grammar-school boys.

Our school, being chiefly composed of boys who had been withdrawn from the grammar-school, was especially offensive to both the teachers and pupils of the latter; and, so far as we were concerned, there was not a particle of love lost. With the other schools we had been contented



with driving them out of the bed of the river, and never for a moment thought of pursuing them. With the grammar-school boys it was quite the contrary. They had aggravated us greatly, having attacked treacherously a small party of us, and injured two or three rather seriously; besides which, they chased them right up into the schoolroom. I was one of that party. We had been bathing at the mid-day interval, down at the mouth of the river, and were returning up the dry bed of the stream, as peaceably as it is possible for schoolboys to do, when, without any warning, a shower of stones fell amongst us from the banks of the river and the ruins of a dismantled bridge. Of course we were rather amazed, but not dismayed, at first, and we returned the fire heartily as soon as we could recognize our assailants; but they had the advantage of numbers, position, and shelter.

While we were few and fully exposed, and, worse than all, cut off from our comrades, they were ever receiving reinforcements. So, after a fierce battle, we retreated, with them in full cry after us. I do not think any of our side fairly ran away, but the others clearly had the victory for the time, and followed us up to the schoolroom door, to our intense mortification and disgust.

This was the beginning of the war which for a time convulsed the junior population of Errol. Vows of vengeance both loud and deep were made by our boys; and, as we could not settle our differences with the grammar-school boys as we had done with the others, and, moreover, could not depend on the safety of any of our companions when separated from the main body, we resolved on more extreme measures, and determined to assert our supremacy, or, at least, to

show that not one of McDonald's pupils could be ill-used with impunity.

The favourite game of our school, the game of games with us, was shinta. In this game a ball is driven from one end of the playground to the other with clubs, the players taking sides, one party endeavouring to drive the ball one way, the other doing their best to prevent them by driving it in the opposite direction. Sandy and I were almost the only boys who came from the country, and had such free access to trees as to enable us to get shintas easily. Accordingly, we were soon besieged on all sides by applications to bring down shintas to the boys; and every branch of tree or bush which had the natural bend required we used to note, and cut on the first opportunity, to the great wrath of the forester and bailiff, who, however, never found us out. It came to pass, therefore, in

a little while, that we pretty well stocked the whole school with clubs, and just then war was declared by the scholars of the Burgh School against ours.

Stone-throwing is a rather dangerous amusement, and severe injuries are often inflicted thereby. But though this is quite true, yet, just as is the case with the use of all missiles, there must be myriads expended to do very little execution, and therefore our soldiers always like to hear the command to charge. The hand-to-hand fight has ever been the most decisive one which settles the question, and the sooner it can be come to the sooner will the battle be ended.

So it was with us ; long shots would not do any longer in our state of temper, therefore we never went out without our shintas, which, from being playthings, became, and were, well-fitted to become warlike implements. In



consequence it soon became as usual for us to chase the boys of the grammar-school into their den, as it was for the Highlanders to chase the French in the Peninsula. I fear we were not very chivalrous—certainly our opponents were not, for they several times in great strength set on Sandy and myself as we went home, and though they never did us much damage, they caused us no small alarm. I fear we might sometimes act as cowardly, but it was with the school as a whole that we were at war, and collectively we fought them, not individually.

We got the upper hand at the very first, but it required a long succession of fights before we fairly conquered, which we did at last, by driving the whole school, masters and scholars, before us in triumph through the main street of Errol, and forcing them to take refuge in their own premises.

I am not sure how Mr. McDonald felt about this petty warfare—very much, I dare say, as the great Christopher with the snow-balling students—inclined from duty to scold, and from feeling to praise. But our last escapade was by far too serious to be permitted to pass unreprieved. The rector of the beaten school went to the magistrates and complained, and that afternoon our school was startled by the entrance of two officers, I do not remember for what specific purpose, but really to bring this stone-throwing and street-fighting to an end. They wished to search the school-room, I remember, for our weapons, but they were not permitted.

Mr. McDonald treated us to a lecture on the subject after they had departed, and urged us to cease such manifestations for his sake, and to take no notice of the other schools; while he promised to protect us

should we be again assaulted. We cheered him lustily, and promised. What was there we would not have done for his sake? We even learned our lessons to please him, a stretch of boyish liking very rarely found, I am afraid.

CHAPTER VII.

OUR life at school was not very eventful, but it was very pleasant. I daresay now that I made as much progress as was expected, and I do not remember that I ever fell back from the station I had taken at the first, nor yet did my brother Sandy. We were good scholars, and favourites with our schoolfellows. We used often to have parties of them home with us on the half-holidays, and my mother was ever pleased to give a hearty welcome to our friends, which, joined to the delights of roaming at their sweet will among the fields, and hunting for nests, or gathering brambles,



made the invited parties rather objects of envy for the time among the other scholars.

But after I had been a long time at school, and when the time even was looming in the distance that I must leave it, in the end of spring I took a fever, and lay very ill for many weeks ; and after the fever had departed it was as many more before, even with the help of a staff, I could go so far as the garden again. The summer was almost gone before I could go about, and the trees I had last seen in blossom were now loaded with fruit nearly ripe.

What a strange hiatus that was in my life. I remember well puzzling myself about the appearance of the things around me very much, as I have often had to do since, when I have stumbled upon any of my old companions, the comrades of my youth, and have been quite amazed, and, in most cases,

greatly disappointed and annoyed to find them as old as myself. The idea of what they were when last seen remained unchanged, while all else had gone on changing.

This fever was a great affliction, and yet it had its good also. It was a terrible thing for a wild, stirring boy, who had been accustomed to pass so much time in the open air, to be laid up, without any positive pain, it is true, but feeling so very weak, so very helpless, and unable to do anything—unable, even, to move without assistance. I remember when convalescent, and the tide of life flowing again with renewed vigour, being so confident in my own recovered strength, that I resolved to rise and dress and go out; and, taking advantage of a moment when I was left alone, I made the attempt, but only to fall prostrate on the floor, and to find how

thoroughly feeble I had become. This was the afflictive side. On the other, there was, as it were, a new revelation to me of my mother's tenderness, so manifested that it completely cast into the background any feeling, on my part, save that of love and tenderness in return. There had been deaths in the household before, and three of the infant blossoms had been cut down almost without warning ; but I fancy that this was the first time that there had been any long illness of any of us, and, hence, I suppose, the greater tenderness of them all towards me, who so little deserved it.

I do not think I had ever been a decidedly bad boy at that time, I was very much like my neighbours, I fancy, but I remember well that I wondered then at all the kindness I received from everybody, and my mother hardly ever left me. Little Susie could not

be much above two or three years old at the time, and yet even the little darling, who had come to fill up the void made in my mother's heart by the loss of her infants, gave place to me, the wild, rough boy.

Neither were the neighbours unmindful. More than I can name now sent little presents of fruit, and such kinds of dainties, for my delectation. Nor did my boyish companions and schoolfellows neglect me. Many pilgrimages were made by them on the Saturday afternoons to see me, or hear of me. Perhaps the manifold attractions of the beautiful country, and the warm welcome which my dear mother ever gave to the visitors of her sick son, may have had a great deal to do with their willingness to visit me. However, all these attentions helped to lighten the load which the Almighty Father had been pleased to lay on.

As I was gathering strength once more, and was able to enter once again into the things which were interesting the boys, I found that my schoolfellows were full of the news of an approaching festival. A festival, too, which occurred very seldom—only once, indeed, in a great number of years, and which everybody hoped I should be well enough to see.

Errol was a borough, but whether of regality or barony I cannot say, but I rather think it had no town-council nor provost proper till the Reform Bill time; but it must have had some sort of constitution and government, for once in a certain number of years the chief people of the town went over the boundaries, and, I suppose, pointed out to their successors in office, or to those newly admitted into the corporation, the true limits of the burghal lands, and the extent and

boundaries of the common right—the “common guid,” as it is called in Scotland. It was such a celebration which was drawing near, and about which my comrades were so excitedly expectant. Never, according to report, had there been anything equal to the approaching procession seen at Errol. It was not only to surpass all its predecessors there, but even to eclipse the grand parades of the Edinburgh trades, and to beat the far-famed Gardeners’ Walk hollow ; and the Carter’s P boys, what were they to be named along with the Riding of the Marches ? It would be a dreadful misfortune indeed if I should be unable to see such a grand affair as this—I quite agreed with my comrades as to that.

I do not know whether I am right—but I fancy I am—when I say that such displays and processions in general were more common about that time than they have been since ;

certainly my impression is that they were better patronised then. Perhaps the better taste of these later times has had something to do with the diminution of such affairs as these processions were. Perhaps the facilities which people now have of going away to other places may account for it in part ; but with an increase in the number of holidays, it seems to me, looking back to a period thirty years ago, that there is now a real decrease in the number of displays such as this. The time is fast passing, it is to be hoped, when outlandish dresses and uncouth figures shall be the delight of our local societies, and when trumpery and tinsel, in the shape of regalia and titles, shall disfigure the officers of well-meaning and well-worked benefit associations.

The Errol Riding of the Marches, however, was to be a very grand affair, with plenty of

both trumpery and tinsel about it, and the whole district round about was eagerly looking for and gathered in towards the town, to see the show. Nor, weak and feeble though I was, was I to be deprived of the sight. The nearest boundary of the burgh's lands was only a mile distant, and my mother had a friend who lived near the road which the procession was to traverse, so that, if I got that length, I should do well. And we did manage, on the long-expected morning, to get down, and, after waiting for an hour or two, which I did not feel at all wearisome, I saw the great sight, heard the fine music, and became more excited than I ought to have done, or was at all good for me.

I remember distinctly the great event of the day, for the cavalcade came down a by-path, which joined the main road just opposite the window which I shared with a girl a little

younger than myself, who was very attentive to me. But to me, even then, the greatest sight was not that which the people had come to see, it was the masses of the people themselves which impressed me most. I remember well how they poured in a dense flood out of the old by-road into the highway, and the noise they made, which, indeed, nothing comes up to but the "sound of many waters." They were covered with dust from head to foot, and seemed almost as if in uniform ; they were of all ages and sexes, and I had almost said of all ranks too, but the one indiscriminate covering of whitish dust obliterated any marks of extra gentility of which they might have boasted at the start. Before the band could be seen, the crowd was issuing in a dense column ; then followed the band, playing with much better taste and more humour than is generally displayed by Scotch bands now-a-

days, various old Scottish tunes, which I remember even then struck me by their appropriateness as well as beauty.

The main body followed in a long procession, in carriages, on horseback, and on foot. First, and most conspicuous of all, was a huge mounted figure in armour of plate, or, at least, what was meant to represent plate armour; but it rather too visibly betrayed its origin, and even the most inexperienced person present could see quite plainly that it owed its fabrication much more to the tinsmiths of Errol, than to the skilful hands of the cunning armourers of Milan. I believe it would be quite correct in detail, at least as much so as could be expected in these days of shams. However, whatever the panoply was, neither the man nor the horse was a sham; the champion was a huge fellow, a son of Anak of the baser sort, who had let himself out for

the day, whose thews and sinews were cast in the heaviest mould. There was as little chance of any one fancying that he was the debonair knight whose part he so completely travestied, as there was of mistaking the arms as having ever been the accoutrements of a real live man-at-arms. The horse would have done for a prize-charger even at Ashby de la Zouch, during the world-famed passage of arms ; he was so tall, and strong, and handsome, with a coat of the glossiest black, shining even through the dust with which he was covered. But, alas ! for the romance of the affair—everybody knew that Captain was only lent for the day, by a great distiller in the neighbourhood, and was every day employed in the ignoble work of carting whiskey to the public-houses around. Everybody did not know, though I did, and was able to inform my sympathising and shrinking companion,

that Captain had already killed two men. However, that horse has ever been to me the typical horse for a knight's charger ; and when reading of ancient feats of arms in "Ivanhoe" and elsewhere, I always fancy such steeds, though hardly such men as Captain and his rider. Though Captain might be seen any day going along the same road, he was the great attraction, and fairly divided the plaudits of the people with the champion. It is true that he generally had a cart with whiskey casks behind him, and now he had only a man on his back whiskey-laden.

After the champion came the burgesses, four abreast, on steeds of every kind, ridden in every way, with very little regard to order or propriety by this time ; and the whole array terminated by the various benefit societies walking in their order, each with its banners and band of music, and men in grotesque

dresses, with swords and axes, and various ancient weapons of warfare. Some of the standards were very old, faded, and tattered, and highly prized; and the town flag itself was said to have been the rallying-point of the townsmen as far back as the battle of Pinkiecleuch, if it was not present at the more fatal field of Flodden, where the burghers of Scotland had as great cause as the feudal nobility to mourn over the rash folly of the fourth James, and as many "flowers wede away" as had the forest itself.

I stayed with my mother and her friends till the procession returned from their survey of the eastern limit of the burgh's lands. I was very well occupied, and quite intimate with my little companion, who, I found out, was only, like myself, a visitor for the day. Being a stranger to the country-side, I could point out to her the various notable things,

and thus get out of my shyness, for I was, and ever have been, notably bashful and backward with strangers, especially of the gentler sex, and not less then than since was it the case.

We were told that the magnates of the burgh made some new burgesses, or admitted the sons of some of the present burgesses to that status while at the extremity of their domains. Of course we did not see that, nor yet the festivities which as usual were indulged in on the occasion. But I remember well—and it was not disapproved of in those days—that the cavalcade, as they returned back to the town, seemed as if they had been sacrificing liberally to the jolly god, as he is called.

Perhaps this had been the case all throughout the day ; anyway its effect could be clearly

seen now, in the state of various parties of the processionists, and in the increased hubbub and disorder of both horse and foot, of actors and spectators. Even the mighty man in armour reeled in his saddle, and, though the great horse stepped forward at his wonted pace, the rider needed the help of his pages or squires to keep him in the saddle, and to prevent him pushing the gallant beast into a trot, which would have left the magnates of the party far behind.

Happy those who had a carriage on this return, to shield them from the gaze of the curious, and enable them to maintain their character for sobriety, which those on horseback fairly lost, and the footmen, the vulgar of the clay, seemed to care little about.

So ended the Riding of the Marches at

Errol, so far as I saw them ; but the festival was not fully over for days, as we heard afterwards at home.

CHAPTER VIII.

“WHAT would you like to be, Steenie?” my mother asked me one day some time after I had completely got better, and when my hair was beginning to get of a decent length once more ; for it came out in handfuls after the fever, and took a long time to grow as before, only, very singularly, it changed its hue altogether, and instead of the bright red of my early days, became a rich dark brown. “What would ye like to be, Steenie?”

“I kinna ken, mother.”

“But it’s time ye were thinking about it now, and we maun be on the look-out for ye ;

it'll no do to have ye idle, and I'm feared ye maunna think o' the school ony mair, my man."

"I've never thocht about it at a', mother, and I would like better to be workin' than at the schule ony day. I'll be ony thing ye like, mother."

I had begun by this time to see that it was a great tax on the family finances my staying longer at school; and, besides, all boys like changes, and expect ever that something delightful will happen in whatever new position they may be put. I was very near fourteen years of age now, and it was not usual for boys in our rank in life to be kept so long either at home or at school

My mother had been that day in a neighbouring village, and had met a person from Edinburgh, who had lately commenced business, and had married the sister of one of her

acquaintances, and was making a great show of well-doing, whether there was any reality for it or not.

“How would you like to be a shopkeeper, Steenie?” she asked again.

“Very weel, mother, but far better to be a sailor; I would like to gang to the sea, and to learn to be a captain, far better than to stand a’ day daeing naething behind a counter.”

My mother laughed, and then became very grave and serious, as she said,

“Na, na, Steenie, dinna say a sailor; at no hand would I gie my consent to your ga’en to sea. I’ve kent far ower muckle o’ it in my time for that.”

“But what have ye kent, mother?—ye might tell me.”

“No the noo, laddie, but only that I kent mony, mony mothers left desolate, mony,

mony fatherless bairns and waefu' widows, and mony sad hearts among my ain folk that were connected wi' sailors. Na, na, ye maunna think o' the sea."

I had long known that my mother's native place was a seaport town on the Firth some-way, but she said very little about it or her young life to us, and from what little she had said we were very anxious to hear more.

"Were there ony o' your friends lost at sea, mother?" I at last ventured to ask.

"Whisht! laddie, dinna ask ony mair questions; but I'll tell you this. My father was lost at sea, and I mind o' the word coming hame when I was a bairn, no muckle bigger than wee Susie; and I mind o' the sair, sair hearts it gie'd us a'; and if there were nae danger to body, as there is, I

would be against your ganging a' the same."

"But what for, mother?" I persisted.

"Just because I want my sons to be decent good men, and I want to keep them at hame near mysel'; you maun just be pleased wi' that answer the noo, Steenie, my man; but about a business—ye would like to be a shopkeeper, wouldna ye?"

"Weel enough, mother, but better to gang to the sea and be a captain. I'll do ony ye like best, mother."

"That's a guid bairn. How would ye like to be a haberdasher, or a cloth merchant, or a grocer, for we canna do ony thing to get a place for ye till we ken what kind o' a trade ye would like to be?"

"I dinna care—ony ye like, mother."

"Nonsense, laddie, ye maun choose for

yourself'; there's Mr. Penston and Mr. Monypenny—I could get ye into one of the shops, I think, if ye would like it. Just you tell me; I'm ga'en to see Mrs. Penston's sister the morn, and ye can tell me before I gang whether I'll speak to her or no."

My mother left me, and I went out to think about the matter. I was not much given to thinking in those days, though I fancy even active boys, like what I was then, think a great deal more than they usually get credit for, heedless as they may appear to be. I have noticed as much consideration and forethought bestowed on boyish excursions as would have sufficed for the advance of an army, and a wasp's nest assaulted and harried after a plan as regular, and as carefully developed, as was the siege of Sebastopol; and more thought-

ful strategy displayed in a game of Scotch and English than was manifested at Bull's Run, while the courage was altogether as real as in any of them. Somehow, however, the current of my thoughts was very easily changed, and a game or amusement of any kind was able to divert me from the most important train of thought which had no reference to amusements. In the present case, I fear, it was so. It was the season for kite-flying; the fields were bare, and there was ample room and verge enough for the long race with which we set them up.

We were rather famous in our country-side for the manufacture of kites, or dragons as we called them, and very anxious to keep up our fame. I cannot tell how many I had lost; they were always getting entangled in the tree-tops, and though both Sandy and

myself were fearless climbers, yet we scarcely ever could succeed in saving them, or, if we did, it was only to find them completely ruined for the time. So kite after kite was built, each new one larger and finer than the last, so long as we could beg or steal paper, and at this time I had a superb one, nearly six feet high, with plenty of string, of my own manufacture, too. It was very difficult this day to raise it, and I had gone all over the field behind our house before I managed to get it fairly and strongly afloat and steady in the air—a process this so interesting to us all, that even my grave sister Menie was quite taken up with it, and none of us had thought for anything but the work in hand. After the kite was steady, and each of us had made our comments on her, and sent up messages along the string, I managed to get her made fast



to a tree in the corner of the garden, and having pretty well exhausted all that could be either done or said till something fresh should occur, my thoughts returned to the subject of the business I should choose.

“What do ye think, Menie, I ought to be?” I asked abruptly.

All of us youngsters had a great idea of Menie’s judgment, though we would not always either allow it or follow it.

“I’m gaen to be a shopkeeper,” Sandy burst in at once—“a shopkeeper like Mr. Allan, and sell tea and sugar, and sweeties—and I’ll buy ships when I grow rich.’

“Whisht! Sandy,” Menie said. “What were ye thinking o’ yersel, Steenie?”

“I’m no sure, and I’m no carin’ what,” I answered. “I’d like to gang to the sea best, and learn to be a captain, like Captain Peterson; but my mother’ll no hear o’

that, and I'm no carin' a pin for onything else."

"But ye should care," Menie answered very seriously. "It's you it maist concerns, Steenie. If I was you I would try to learn some guid business, no a trade onyway, where I could rise in the world."

"Ay, I would try to be a rich man if I was you, Steenie!" Sandy cried.

"I would like it fine—we a' would; but, man, Sandy, ye canna grow rich wi' just a hap, step, and loup when ye like. Ye'll be a grocer, ye say, and lick the sugar, and eat the figs fast enough, nae doubt, but it's no sae easy to get rich—I ken that muckle a'ready."

"No; but, Steenie, a guid business, where ye would get on," Menie said; "a guid respectable business, like Mr. Monypenny's now. Maybe ye might begin

for yersel when your time was out, and get on as weel as he's dune, Steenie."

"Maybe; but if I didna—what then, Menie?"

"Weel, ye would aye be able to work, and get wages wi' him or somebody else, wouldna ye?"

"Ye soud be a minister, Teenie, to mak the folk guid," little Susie lisped, lifting up her grave, sweet four-year old face; "a minister, to do the folk guid, like Mr. Gollee."

"Eh, Menie, d'ye hear that? Wouldna I do weel for a minister?" I said, an involuntary gravity coming over me, and a kind of longing for the work, which I believe is very frequently the case with well brought up Scottish boys at some time or other.

"The best work is no aye the work we

maun or can do, Steenie," Menie replied; "it's no aye what we are to do, and I'm thinking the very best for you is something quite different. I would think o' Mr. Monypenny's shop, or some other like it, if I were you, Steenie."

"My mother spoke of Mr. Penston's in Edinburgh for me," I replied.

"Mr. Penstone's! Oh! that's the man that married Beenie Thamson's sister, and drives out on the Sabbaths in such style—is it no?" Menie asked.

"I fancy sae; he lives in Edinburgh ony way, and my mother spoke o' him."

"That's the place, Steenie," Sandy cried; "and then ye'll get a ride out wi' him in his gig on the Sundays. He passed my father and me last Sabbath, when we were ga'en to the kirk, drivin' a bonnie brown horse in fine style."

"I suppose I maun jist gang to him. But, Menie, what do ye think?" I asked.

"I would chuse the business, but no the maister. It's a respectable business; the Lord Provost o' Edinburgh is a cloth-merchant and a knight, but I dinna think he ever drave about the country that way on the Sabbath-day. I would like Mr. Monypenny's far better, and then ye could come hame on the Saturday nights."

Menie had a great regard for the Sabbath-day, and though our people were not over strict and sabbatarian in their notions, so had we all, and Mr. Penston's habitual disregard of that day was a thing my mother did not like at all.

Mr. Monypenny was a draper in Errol, having a large shop opposite the Cross, and quite as well known as any place in

the town. All the country people frequented it, and the business done, always good, was at term times very extensive. The young men and lads employed by Mr. Monypenny were, in the patriarchal fashion of the time, boarded in his own house and kept in strict discipline, and were mostly the sons of respectable people in the neighbourhood. Then my mother was well acquainted with Mr. Monypenny, and knew most of the shopmen—so that altogether it would have been most suitable and fit for me; but then afterwards I should have to go to some more stylish place to unlearn perhaps much that I had acquired there, and to begin my novitiate anew. So my own liking for the larger town, and the desire of having me in the best possible position from the first, carried the day for an Edinburgh shop.

How very short-sighted people really are, even when most painstaking and careful! Had I gone to worthy Mr. Monypenny I should have been better instructed, better cared for in every way, and saved a vast amount of disgrace, as well as much hardship—so far, at least, as the special business was concerned.

CHAPTER IX.

It was one thing to come to an agreement as to what I should be, but a very different one to find me a situation where I could learn my business. Mr. Penston had no vacancy at the time—at least, he said so, and I had to wait. During the month or two which followed I often went into Edinburgh, and though the method of advertising for apprentices was not so general then as it is now, it was still not unfrequently resorted to, and I made it a point to see as many of the papers as I could, and every other means was adopted

to find out shopkeepers who might need apprentices.

Perseverance is ever rewarded, it is said, and so at last my reward came, and I went into Edinburgh with my father to see after a place. It was about the very first time he had ever done anything for me that I recollect, unless it was that once he gave me a dreadful thrashing, which, as it was the only time, and terribly severe, was to be remembered well, without doubt. My father never did any of the things which are generally considered the man's special work in the household; perhaps he was wise enough to see that they were better done without his aid, which was a fact—or perhaps he was lazy. I have an idea that, being tied down to long uncertain hours, and from his employment very often from home during the night, my mother had per-

force been compelled to do them ; and now he had got so much accustomed to it, that he was content to let well alone, and not spoil it by trying to make it better. I have no doubt whatever that my mother would have done better with me than my father could, but it would not have looked so well, nor been so proper in the circumstances ; and so what was best gave way to what people would consider most proper.

My father was a very decent man in his way. I daresay he did not much object to spend a day in Edinburgh, which, though we were so near it, was rather a novelty to him, though he was a native of the ancient city born and bred. Few people in those days, of much higher worldly fortune than our people were, ever thought of a conveyance for such a journey ; they went in the primitive fashion—on foot, unless



they could get a chance ride. Now-a-days anyone going exactly the same journey would take the train, for I find there is a railway station within ten minutes' walk of our old house. Trains were not in those days, and coaches which passed our place were few and dear, so we walked through Errol, and along the shore road to the great city. We set out very early, seeing we were to return that night.

It was a very pleasant time of the year, being the early spring time, and the country was glorious with promise everywhere. The trees were coming into leaf and blossom, the fields clothed with the fresh delicate green of the young corn, or filled with husbandmen putting in the seed. Beautiful at all times that stretch of country is, but most magnificent at that season, when the faintest heart must swell, and

new hopes arise even in the most downcast and desponding. It was a most suitable time for a youth to go forth into the world to begin his warfare, while all nature seemed to sympathise with him, and cheer him hopefully on. I do not remember that I felt this definitely, but I remember auguring success in our enterprise of the day, and future prosperity, from the joyous aspect of the scene and of the time.

There was not a great deal to distract my mind from either its observations or speculations. My father was never, at any time, a great speaker. I do not think there was very much poetry about him, and the change of season was to him very much a matter-of-course; but even he was somewhat influenced by the appearance of things around, and he conversed with me more gaily and freely than was customary with him.

I remember he pointed out to me all the noted places we passed, and told me of the remarkable events which had happened, or the famous people who had lived there, mingled with more modern stories of things within his own remembrance. Especially, when we drew near to Edinburgh, he showed me—for he had been a wild Edinburgh boy in his time—as we went up the Canongate, the famous houses with which it is, or was, studded on either side, and many places and things which have now-a-days altogether disappeared, and, even then, were falling into decay.

We succeeded in the object of our journey.

John Chapman was a merchant in the Lawnmarket. He had succeeded to an old-fashioned shop opposite to Libberton's Wynd, which an uncle, as antique almost as the shop,

had left to him. Mr. Chapman had succeeded to the shop and business, and the snug little fortune which the old man had left was distributed among the other relatives, to John's great vexation.

He had been bred as a cloth-merchant in the same shop to which he had returned, but he had been a good many years in England, and had acquired tastes and habits quite foreign to the quiet folk of Edinburgh, and notions about business as different as possible from those entertained by traders dwelling in the locality of the Lawnmarket. His relationship to the former well-to-do tenant, and his succession to his business, ought to have made John's fortune, for he was thereby at once constituted as a man having good credit, and with a good going and old-established business. But John Chapman could not be

content with the old jog-trot way, and was determined to change entirely the system of the whole establishment. He was at that very time engaging young men as assistants, and he wanted one or two apprentices; so my father agreed with him, and I was engaged to serve for five years, provided, after a month's trial, I liked the business, and, more important still, that he liked me.

After making the arrangement that I was to come in a week, my father and I went to call on a brother of his, where we dined and spent the afternoon. Just that very day a dreadful rumour of the disappearance of a noted character had spread over the town; the person lost was only a woman of bad fame, but she was well-known, and the disappearance came at a time when there had been a great many

more things of the kind, which never had been found out, about which all was mystery, in fact, and, therefore, all the more appalling. We found our friends talking about this wherever we went, and it was a subject quite likely to arrest the attention of a lad like me. I was perfectly familiar with the fact that there was a class of villains, professional body-snatchers. I had seen the town of Errol stirred out of its staid propriety into downright madness by the discovery that graves had been violated, and bodies stolen out of its churchyard; and had myself formed one of a multitude who went to see the rigid examination of the various burial places around, when, alas! only empty graves were found, the sight of which so angered the populace, that very little more would have caused them to fly to arms. I had at-

tended parish meetings where the whole population of age to bear arms were formed into a volunteer guard to defend, not their hearts, but the graves and ashes of their kindred, and not to amuse themselves with parades, and drills, and fine dresses, but to go regularly, night after night, on duty with arms in their hands, loaded and prepared to shoot the lawless and unhallowed intruders. I had heard a minister of the gospel advocate the duty of shooting the body-snatchers, as one would noxious vermin, and my whole nature had been stirred. And, in some indefinite way, these villains were blamed for the mysterious disappearance of this unhappy woman, and of the others who had fallen out of the ranks of the living, and left no sign nor trace behind them.

We should have plenty to tell when we

got home. These mysterious disappearances had already made some noise ; the stealing of the dead from their graves had made much more ; and in the country all kinds of rumours and speculations were current.

I remember how we boys used to speculate on the modes in which the villains acted ; for that murders were being committed we all were quite agreed, and also that the resurrectionists were the murderers. It was commonly reported that people were surprised in the dark, and their faces instantaneously covered over with a plaster of some kind, by which, as they were unable by any efforts to remove it, they were suffocated, and so died.

It is not worth while to set down these things now ; but among the common people then such ideas were usually current, and the effect of their currency was to throw

a fear and dread on all in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh, if forced to be abroad on dark nights or in lonely places. I was not usually afraid of the dark—at least, I had the character of being the boldest of all my companions; but this night I did not care to be out late, nor I suspect did my father very much. The idea of people having been murdered, which these mysterious disappearances suggested, raised ugly notions in our minds about what might happen to ourselves on those lonely lengths of road we had to traverse. An idea once raised and got hold of is not so easily shaken off again; the mind seems rather to exert itself to show it to the imagination in all the varied forms in which it can appear, and so it was that night with me. I had even then, young as I was, formed a theory with regard to crime; whether I am right

or not, I cannot say, but the experience of the past thirty years almost confirms me in it. My theory is that one great crime is, as it were, the parent of many more. One great and marked murder is followed generally by many others, partaking in part of the same character ; one forgery by forgeries—and so on. Whether this comes to pass from imitation, or that aroused by the discovery people are more suspicious, watchful, and ready to detect criminals in that particular direction, I do not affirm ; I leave that to philosophers, and only say that I give my voice in favour of the theory of imitation.

CHAPTER X.

MY father and I reached home some time after sunset. We met with no interruption on the road, and, saving that we were very much tired, were little the worse for our journey. Of course, to people like ours such a journey as this was quite an event, the like of which had never happened in the family before, and our return had been eagerly waited for. They expected we should bring news that I was soon to make a start in a new life, and of itself this was enough to excite them all at home.

It was not such a very rare thing either for some of us to be in Edinburgh, but it was a very rare one indeed for my father to be the chief agent in doing any important matter, and greatly enhanced its importance; besides, we had very little intercourse with my father's friends, and every one was curious to hear all the news we had to tell. I do not know but that the mysterious rumours which we had heard excited more interest among our people than anything else we had to relate, and certainly they were set a-thinking in a particular way in consequence, and my brother Sandy and sister Menie were thrown into a panic about themselves and about me, which deepened as the time drew near when I should have to leave them.

Of course my prospects formed the chief topic of conversation that night—the others

were by the way ; the placing of myself in the world was the most momentous. All were anxious to know, and eagerly inquired what sort of a man my master, that was to be, was, and what sort of a place his shop.

My mother had rather peculiar, but, on the whole, sound notions, I believe, as to what were the true marks of a respectable shop. Any place which was all glitter and show she would by no means patronize. She reasoned about shops very much as she did about people—rightly or wrongly as the case might be—and held that, as a gaudy dress and profusion of mosaic jewelry did not make the person wearing them a lady or a gentleman, but rather proved that the reverse was the case, so gaud and glitter, and such like outside demonstrations about a place of business, was

by no means a favourable sign. Plain, quiet, clean premises weighed more with her a great deal; and I must say that, however much I differed from her then, I quite agree in her opinion now.

In answer to her questions, I described, as best I could, the look of the people and of the shop in the Lawnmarket. My father had said briefly that it was just above the Luckenbooths, places of which I knew nothing, and had seen nothing, but with which both had been apparently well acquainted in their early life, though, by the improving hands and better taste of the new generation, they had been swept away, with many other much more poetical and interesting memorials.

“I’ll tell ye, mother,” I cried at last, a little out of patience with the repeated questions; “ye’ll mind the place where

they hang the folk—weel, it's just right opposite that."

"The laddie's in a creel. How should I ken that place, I wonder? Where is it?—by the High Kirk or Bank Street—tell me that, Steenie?" was the rather sharp answer.

"Close at the head o' Bank Street, mother," I answered. "But surely ye mind the place at the head o' Libberton's Wynd well enough?—a' Edinburgh folk ken that. Eh, Sandy, man, I saw the stanes the gallows is putten into; my faither showed them to me, and telled me how they did, and——"

"He had unco little to do, doing ony such thing," my mother said, quite angrily. "Just you mind what you're saying, my man; I'm no one o' your Edinburgh folk, for a' your faither is."

“Weel, mother, dinna be angry—I didna mean ony ill; but I thought that a’body that kent Edinburgh kent that place. I’ll ne’er forget it, ony way, though I never saw the place before, and may never see it again.”

“Eh! will ye see the folk hanged, Steenie?” Sandy cried, with a strange mixture of aversion and desire, of horror and yet eagerness, in his face and voice, as if he did not know whether he would like to see such a sight or not.

“I dinna ken; if I liked, I fancy I could. But it’s no a braw shop, mother—it’s neither sae big nor sae braw as cheap John’s in the Nungate o’ Errol—is it, faither?”

“It’s a very good place for you, my man,” my father answered. “You should know the place very well, Bell”—my mo-

ther's name was Isabel, but my father always called her Bell, or Tibby when he was very angry or much pleased—"and have been in it many a time, I fancy."

"Maybe; but a' thing's sae muckle changed that I dinna mind; but if you're baith pleased I've nae doubt it'll do very weel. What did you think o' your maister, Steenie, and when did he say you were to gang in?"

"He's a sharp man enough, mother, and no very big, and a very dressy body, and his face is one o' the queerest I e'er saw, wi' twa sides. I'm to gang in on Monday, he said."

"Twa sides to his face!" Menie cried—"how's that, Steenie?"

"I've heard of twa-faced people," my mother said, laughing—"is that what ye mean, my man?"

“No, mother, it’s not that. I canna very well tell ye what I mean, but I think I’m right for a’ that; he looked to me as if he was laughing wi’ the ae side, when he was looking as steady as a judge wi’ the ither at my faither. I thought sae, ony way, when they were speaking o’ me ga’en to the business.”

“Hout, laddie, ye dinna ken what ye would be at; faces have mony kinds o’ expression, as your cousin Patrick could tell ye,” my mother said. “There’s your ain even sometimes is dour-looking enough, and then in a minute after, before you can think, it’s blythe; it changes like the shimmer o’ the moon on water whiles.”

“Maybe, mother, I’m wrang, but I thought as I’ve said. He’s a bit dressy kind o’ body, ony way, and wears a grand gold chain round his neck, and a watch in

his waistcoat-pocket—nae less than a real gold watch, for I saw't; and he has a ring on his wee finger wi' a shining stane in it, like a diamond—will it be one, d'ye think?—and he speaks English or Englified, as Mr. McDonald used to say, very clippy-like; but he looked kind enough for a' that, and spoke very kindly and frankly to me too."

"Oh! yes, he promises very well, and will be a good master to him, no fear of that," my father added; "and what does it matter how he speaks or what he wears, or how he dresses, if he learns Steenie his trade properly? I spoke to my brother Peter about him, and he's a respectable man at all events, and far more pushing than his auld uncle, and just the man for Steenie, to a certain extent."

What was my father's "certain extent"

we never could find out, in this case or any other; it was a phrase he used often when he wanted to round a period, or fill a gap; but it always conveyed the idea, even where there was no such intention, that there was something wanting, that a thing or person, though good to a certain extent, might have a great deal of what was bad about him or, at least, that there was a lack of some kind, if no positive blemish. We were well acquainted with this habit, yet it troubled us sometimes to see that my mother was not altogether satisfied, though she had no definite reason for her dissatisfaction. Gold watches and chains worn so ostentatiously were by no means according to her old-fashioned notions, and she doubted that the Duke of Devon might be an impetus to the *Gazette*

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CHAPTER XI.

IT seems to me as if the character of our Scottish people had greatly changed within my remembrance; I do not think the young generation is at all like the older one. Whatever may have been the causes at work, I fancy that there is a greater difference within the last thirty years than had taken place during the previous century. Perhaps I am in error, but I think, on the whole, that this elder age of ours is a vastly better one than even its immediate predecessors—the state of the

Continent, and the insane war in America notwithstanding. These latter show us that the same original elements are still existing in human nature, and are as ready as ever to break out, and to seek, by the use of the same old means of war and rapine, the ends which the corrupt heart desires. But, on the whole, there is a change for the better.

In my young days, when I was at school, and when I first went into Edinburgh, the youth of Scotland were intensely Scottish for one thing, though their seniors did not lead the way by any ridiculous fuss about their patriotism in the direction which is now taken, and Wallace Monuments and Scottish Lions were never heard of. In our rank in life we doted on Wallace; blind Harry was a classic with us, and was well known and highly

esteemed in every peasant household in the land. You may speak to boys by the hundred now who never even heard of the name. Then there were numberless old stories handed down by tradition, oftentimes grotesque enough, and full of diablerie, which were related beside the fire in the winter nights, still further keeping the feeling alive—for as yet cheap literature was not, the day-dawn was only approaching, and new books were very scarce indeed. Yet we boys knew all about the Porteous Mob, and the troubles which had vexed our native land, both before and since that dreadful outburst of fury; and we were just on the eve of a time when the old *dour*, pugnacious spirit was to break forth again in a way, and with a reality about it, too, which showed that our Edinburgh populace had not lost its



character of being the very fiercest in Europe.

I have been led into this digression by thinking of the strange state of matters in people of our rank and degree at that time. Strange, that is to say, when contrasted with such households now. We were better educated a great deal, and better read in a very much greater degree, than nine-tenths of the people of our class, young or old, now are. Yet, even with us, there was a great deal of superstition of a certain kind, and we were, I fancy, greatly more credulous than people of the same class at the present day. We believed in part the reports which were then flying about the country, though not so implicitly as our neighbours. I do not think any one could have altogether resisted the currents of rumour at that

time, they were so strong and so persistent; but—as we tried to do—they could separate the few grains of truth from the abundance of vulgar exaggerations and horrors in which they were shrouded. So when I began to tell our people about the dreadful stories which were flying about Edinburgh, and of the stern fact that various persons had certainly, but in an unaccountable way, disappeared, my mother and Menie, though greatly terrified, would not allow themselves to be led away by the vulgar fear; and though I got strict charges and counsels as to my conduct, and was often reminded how watchful and careful I should be, they did not think these reports of weight enough to prevent me leaving home.

The following days were very busy ones in the household, preparing for my departure.

I was to be boarded in my master's house, and was only to get home now and then—a very great disappointment to them all, for they had reckoned on my being at home every Sabbath. It was necessary therefore to make a greater provision of shirts and stockings and other things; indeed my whole wardrobe had to be put in order to accompany me.

Mr. Chapman did not approve of his apprentices going home every Sunday; he thought it did them harm, and had a tendency to make them home-sick—though how that could be, he did not say. Perhaps the long walk out and in might have tended to make me lazy on Monday morning, or languid during the day; but I rather think it would not have had that effect. Mr. Chapman expected his boys to go to church with him, and he had a pew for us all in

one of the city churches. This pleased my mother greatly, more than anything else, I do believe; for, though her piety was never paraded for the inspection of anyone, it was both deep and genuine. Perhaps it might be a little inconsistent of her to wish me to come home every Sabbath, seeing, if I had come, there would have hardly been the slightest probability of my getting to church. However, it was needful to prepare for my being away for a month at least, and getting all things ready kept them busy enough.

My mother had distant relations in Edinburgh, from whom she heard sometimes about her own family; and it happened that on the Saturday a letter arrived from them, enclosing an advertisement, cut out of a London paper, seeking the next of

kin to a person of her own name, who had died abroad in one of the colonies, leaving a large fortune. There was scarcely a family of her class in those small Fife towns some member of which had not gone away out of the knowledge of his friends and kindred. I have known many cases myself of such lost ones being found sometimes in the most casual way, after an interval of long years; and people of the generations immediately preceding had known many cases as strange, and disappearances as perplexing. Men were so often pressed into the Navy, and desertions were so frequent whenever they could find an opportunity, and could obtain shelter in some other country, that such events were less to be wondered at in former days.

In my mother's family there had been one, if not more, individuals who had

thus disappeared. An uncle of hers had been heard nothing of for years, since he was left behind on the beach in a boat attack some time during the American war. There were all sorts of surmises about him, and his fate, but somehow none of his friends had ever believed him to be dead; it was rather supposed that he had joined the freebooters or pirates, of whom there were still traces in the Spanish Main. He was known to be reckless and daring enough for that or anything else, and disgust at compulsory servitude was not at all unlikely to drive him to extremities. So my mother's friends in Edinburgh, and she herself, though much less confidently, came to the conclusion that this advertisement might refer to him, and that she was the next of kin specially wanted. She therefore resolved to go in with me on

the Monday, and see what should be done. If she really was one of the heirs, her eldest son had little need to go into a petty draper's shop to learn the trade; but she never hesitated a moment, or, so far as I could see, faltered in her purpose of sending me out into the world.

Our nearest neighbour was an old man, one of those small proprietors called bonnet lairds in Scotland. He had made a good deal of money as a baker in the ugly town of Trarant, and had now retired, leaving his business to his son, and lived in a nice house on his own land close by the road. He was a good man, and a ruling elder in one of the smaller and stricter sects of the Scottish dissenters. I had ever been somewhat of a favourite with him, perhaps for my mother's sake, for the venerable man had a

very high opinion of her. So it came to pass that I was invited to take tea with him the last Sabbath evening I was to be at home.

Our people I verily believe were good people, but certainly they had not the same way of showing it as old Mr. Baxter had; for, in addition to the wise and kindly counsels which he gave me—counsels which, coming from an old man of eighty, universally respected and looked up to, had great authority—he solemnly blessed me, laying his hands on my head and praying over me, before he would permit me to depart.

CHAPTER XII.

It was in the beginning of the month of May that I entered the shop of Mr. John Chapman, in the Lawnmarket of Edinburgh, as an apprentice. I have not so many pleasant reminiscences connected with the shop itself that I should dwell long on what happened to me there, nor is it of much consequence to anybody that I should set down the daily routine of my life. It had its diversities, doubtless pleasant and agreeable sometimes, and not unfrequently the reverse; it had its times of joys and its times of sorrow, of pleasures

and of pains. To a boy like me, the very fact of being in a shop brings no small amount of pleasure; the change of faces is so constant, and the variety of occupation so unceasing, that one cannot very well weary. Though the routine work of dressing out the shop windows every morning, and dismantling them again at night, might oftentimes be toilsome and heavy, the variety among the customers was ever amusing. Whether you were teased with an order for a halfpenny worth of tape, a stay-lace, or a yard of ribbon, or managed to secure an order for a wedding-outfit, for which you should receive pounds instead of pence, the different sorts of people, and the phases of character by each presented, prevented anything like weariness.

A shop of this kind is one of the best places in the world to learn that kind of

smart, vulgar small talk which is so much appreciated by girls of a certain class, and Mr. Chapman's was one of the best in Edinburgh for acquiring it. It is quite true the acquisition generally makes its possessor flippant, pert, and disagreeable, and has a decided tendency to make him also most obsequious, and even servile, to his superiors; while at the same time it renders him overbearing to all over whom he can exert a little authority. I never could learn it, though my opportunity was great, for Mr. Chapman, before I had been with him long, began to manifest his own particular notions, and soon became as well-known to bargain-hunters—which comprised the whole rank and file of the womenkind of the lower part of the middle classes—as was the High Kirk itself; and dressmakers delighted to patronize the new shop.

It is an accomplishment to be able to speak nonsense. I never could learn it, do as I liked. I do not mean to say I never spoke nonsense—far from that; I have both spoken it and written it, but I mean that sort of pert, smart nothingness which passes as a proof of cleverness with such people as our customers were. I have been quite enraged at myself, and still more enraged at a fellow-apprentice who had learned the art to perfection. I, like all young fellows, desired to stand well with the girls, and when alone I got on—or, at least, I thought so—very well, but whenever Davies appeared, they would be just as easily led away to laugh with him in his folly, ay, and even to romp with him, as it was possible to be.

Ned Davies was the son of an Englishman who held some kind of office about

Newbattle. He had been valet or footman to one of the lords, and got this appointment on the estate at his death. Ned had the clipped tongue of the Southerners, and without the least pretension to more learning than would just enable him to pass muster at the counter in the way of counting or writing, had at the same time a tongue that never wearied, and an audacity that nothing could daunt.

I do not think I ever envied anybody during all my life more than I did Ned for this gift of the gab for a time. Ned was but a little shambling fellow, too, without a single good feature in his face, or grace to his person. Some people called him Runtz, in fact, and his character was quite as peculiar as his face or person, and very much resembled it. He was as volatile as a sparrow, and

you could never tell how you might find him from time to time. Sometimes quite *empressé* with his attention, and again positively boorish or sullen, as the case might be, so that for days he would hardly speak. Yet he was not a bad fellow on the whole, though for years he was the plague of my life, and often seriously injured, or at least annoyed me.

There was far less display in shops in those days than there is now. In Edinburgh plate glass was almost, if not altogether unknown; indeed, I remember well, we lads used to go especially to see windows so filled. In the Lawn-market such a thing was never thought of, but Mr. Chapman had a new front put into the shop just after I went to him, and was perhaps the first in the

old town who began to advertise largely and profess to sell goods below the cost price.

He had profited well by his London experience. While there, he had been in a place which cheated the people systematically, by selling them bargains for cash, and he sought to introduce this system into Edinburgh.

When London could only be reached at the soonest by an expensive steamboat voyage of two days, or a still more expensive and weary journey by coach, the intercourse between the two cities could not be very great, and things passed as being in the London style, which were of no style at all, but the product of his own vulgar vanity. So it was both with the appearance and the mode of conducting business in our shop; and the



master speaking a kind of bastard English, and aping what he considered English manners, obtained the nickname of London John, and was well known by it all over Edinburgh.

All that he could do, however, did not make us lads copy him. Imitative as lads generally are, there was yet something about him which prevented any of us, even Ned Davies, trying to adopt his manners. As for myself, I was come of people who did not know anything about London, who spoke in kindly Scotch, and who had always taught us to avoid pretension and pretence.

With the crowd of bargain-seekers, our shop soon became a well-known emporium, and the business we did was very great. The custom of prigging, as it is called in Scotland—a word not to be under-

stood in its English acceptation, by any means—that is, of beating down the price of every article, was then in full force. People did not think they either got a bargain, or were just to themselves, unless they forced the trader to give them a large deduction. It was a bad system, and it is to the credit of London John, that, unless articles had become unfashionable, or were in some way lessened in value, he did not permit any deduction to be made; but his shopmen were ordered to sell them at the price marked, or not at all. It was a step in the right direction, yet I am not sure but that the great majority of the people would have been better pleased even to have paid higher, if they had done so after getting an allowance.

I was all that summer very busy learn-

ing the business, acquiring some knowledge of the goods, and a better acquaintance with the city. At first my principal work was going out with the things which had been purchased, so that I soon came to know the town very well. The Old West Bow then existed, the strangest and most curious street that I have ever seen, with its peculiar gabled houses, and projecting galleries, and miscellaneous shops, devoted to odds and ends—old books, old iron, old guns, pistols and swords. All the dealers in it seemed to be old, and the wares they dealt in were of the same character. And though the street had a dirty, and even a gloomy, appearance, and a most ancient frozzy smell at all times, there was a picturesque air about it, which one, revisiting Edinburgh now-a-days, misses much.

The Castle Hill was then perfect, though there was some talk of a new road round the back of the castle, and a new bridge towards the South side, both of which are now accomplished facts. I was allowed to go home about once a month, and remained till the Monday mornings. It was a great day, that of my first visit, I well remember; I was no prodigal, nor was I shewing any symptoms of becoming one, but such a preparation as they had made, and such a reception as I got, I'll never forget. Everybody about the place, as well as my own people, were curious about me and about my shop, and there was very little thought of going to church, I am pretty sure, after they had heard that I was coming out that day.

During these bright months of summer, there had been a cloud gathering and

deepening over the city. People's minds were excited, as I have already said, and rumours of the most extraordinary kind were continually flying about. People spoke with bated breath, too. No one liked to speak out boldly on the subject, where all was so mysterious. Sundry individuals had disappeared, had gone out of sight entirely ; and the number was increasing. Some of these people, known to almost everybody in the city, after being seen alive and well one day, had at once disappeared without any warning—without any probable cause had passed away, leaving no trace behind, but casting a gloom on men's minds, and fear on the boldest spirits. It was well known that the anatomical professors were eager to get, and ready and willing to pay well for, subjects for dissection in their classes. The way in which

their wants had hitherto been supplied was also pretty well known. There was no seeming connexion between the people missed and the lecture halls, yet somehow it was towards them and the doctors that the fears of the people pointed; and stories, too horrible to be related, surmises as wild as imagination could conceive, were every day obtaining greater currency and weight, till the popular mind seemed to be tenanted by a demon of fear and anger. All this time the authorities were completely baffled, there not being the faintest trace for them to lay hold of. A very strange state of things this, to exist in a city like Edinburgh; and still stranger does it appear, when—as was soon afterwards discovered—it is considered that there were many people who must no doubt have been quite well aware of the facts, and others

who, knowing quite well some of the victims, and even recognising them, nevertheless took no notice, as if it had been none of their business to interfere and to check a series of crimes which they—the surgeons, at least—must have known were being perpetrated for their own advantage.

CHAPTER XIII.

ONE day in the end of autumn of that year, Mr. Chapman sent me over to the Lothian Road, charging me strictly to make haste, and to come back before dusk. I was not much given to loitering, unless when there happened to be any picture shop on the way, or anything particular going on in the street, when, as quite natural, I fancy, I must needs stop to see what it was. However, I never wasted time till I had done the special work I had to do, and never loitered when I had money or things of value of my master's

in my keeping. I had still a great deal of the fear of the country boy of town sharpers, and Edinburgh, I had always been led to imagine, was quite full of people who preyed on the thoughtless and unwary. Of course this simplicity was day by day departing, but as yet it was not completely dissipated.

That evening I was to bring back a considerable sum of money with me, which caused my master to charge me more strictly than usual to hasten back before dusk. There was then no very inviting road between the place to which I was going and the Lawnmarket. I could dive down one of the closes to the Head of the Cowgate, thence through Bristo Port, and past Heriot's Work; or I could go down the West Bow, and through the West Port, which was, as it happened,

the most direct route. Neither way was very delectable, but in those days people paid far less attention to things disagreeable on the streets than they do now; and we put up with the squalor and 'villainous smells of the wynds and closes as things of course—disagreeable, no doubt, but in some sort necessary, at least, quite to be expected. If, with Bailie Nicol Jarvie, we wished for the advantages of the Saut-market, we must put up as we best could with its annoyances also.

I took the route by the West Bow. Had I been an antiquarian, I could have chosen no more interesting way, the peculiar street architecture being worthy of study by those who admire ancient things. I did not delay because of that, though I fancy I was not altogether in-

different to the picturesque appearance of the tall, old gabled-fronted houses, or of the quaint old hostelries of the stablers in the Grassmarket, the resort of carriers from all parts of the country.

My business was not long of being done ; my instructions were very simple—I was either to get the money, or bring back the goods. It seemed my master did not altogether like the appearance of the strangely-dressed women who had made the purchases. However, I had little difficulty with them ; on the contrary, they were very kind to me, gave me some biscuits, and made a great deal of me, while their servant was getting change ; and then, when I was paid, as the night was now closing in, they gave me special directions how to go most speedily back, for I had had some little difficulty

in finding my way—in fact, very nearly lost myself in coming.

These worthy old maiden ladies—for such they really were, though they dressed so strangely—were deeply infected with the vague terror which more or less influenced everybody; and when they dismissed me, they were quite concerned for my safety, for which I was very grateful, though I could not help laughing. Was not I, a strong boy of fourteen, more than a match for whoever might assail me, and quite enough on my guard to resist any one who should try to tempt or entice me to do evil?

When I was returning through the West Port, I was attracted by a little company in a shop, who were just about leaving as I came up. Standing at the counter were two men and a woman

drinking, for it was a whiskey shop, and just as I came up they finished their whiskey and came out. The men were villainous-looking, one of them especially having the most hang-dog like countenance I have ever seen; the other was pleasanter-looking, but the marks of drink and vice were stamped upon his face, though there was an air of sanctimonious kindness on it at the moment. He seemed to be conducting the woman somewhere, and I saw him lounge along the street with her. The woman appeared a stranger in the town, and an Irish woman I heard from her voice, but she was a decent happy-looking old body. In a little, the two, the man and woman, turned up a close into one of the great houses. I do not know what prompted me to stop on the street and watch, but I did so, and saw them go into a pas-

sage at the end of the close; it was getting dusk at the time, but I could see them very well—too well, as the fellow who was lounging behind seemed to think, for he came up to me with an oath, demanded to know what I wanted watching decent people like that, and then threatened to strike me.. I was not such a fool as to wait to be struck, however, and started off on my way to the shop; but this little incident fixed the whole that I had seen fast in my mind, and I carried away with me a mental photograph of the scene, and a clear series of portraits of the characters. The ill-looking ruffians, the jolly, happy-looking country-woman, the close up which she had been led, the whiskey shop in which I had first seen them. I could see them all vividly be-

fore me for years after. Ah! I had little thought then of how dreadful a scene it was which that night should look down upon—a scene in which one of these very individuals was to be the victim, and the others the assassins.

All this was very soon to be known to the whole city, and the indignation of the community to be roused to a pitch it had not reached for a hundred years before, in regard to any crime; and, at the same time, the horrible revelations were to dispel the gloom which had been gradually deepening and enveloping the city, for those mysterious disappearances which had so long alarmed and perplexed the citizens, were about to be accounted for in a fearful way.

I had a story to tell my neighbours in the shop that night, I well remember, all



about what I had seen, and what I thought about it. It was considered a good joke, my country notions about the people of the West Port, and my companions were not sparing in their gibes about my strait-laced ideas—more especially the Edinburgh-born lads among them—and on my cowardice in running away from a threatened blow.

Of course no one of them all attached the very least importance to my rencontre, and I was very much governed by their ideas; but I could not get it out of my mind for all that, and I speculated about the men and the woman a great deal more than ever I had speculated about any strange people before, for the man had such a villainous, ruffian look, and the woman seemed a much decenter sort of person than those hideous individuals were likely to associate with. Anyway the figures

haunted me all that night and the next day in a very strange way, and not even the laughter and mockery of my comrades could dispel the grave apprehension of some evil about to happen.

It was with a positive feeling of pleasure, greater than usual, that I went away on a similar errand to that of the previous afternoon, on the evening of the following day. I had felt a desire all day to go back through the same street, have a look at the place, and try if I could see or learn anything about the people who had taken possession so completely of my thoughts.

I was enabled to do so now, and, mindful of my mother's strict charge, I set off to do my master's business first—it was another parcel to take home to my kind friends of the previous night, I remember how anxious I was to get away



from them, and how much longer it seemed to me I was detained than there was any need for, though it was only in the most kindly way.

When I had got the business finished, I hurried back through the old suburb towards the Grassmarket. I do not know what I expected to see, if, indeed, I expected to see anything, but I ran as if impelled by some superior power.

The West Port is not by any means a prepossessing street, and it was even less so then than it is now. It seemed in some measure a second edition of the Cowgate, with its low shops and still lower public-houses; and there also appeared to be quite an assemblage of lodging-houses of the lowest kind. Beggars' hotels were decidedly in the majority among the tenements in the street, and

that of itself should tell what sort of a population was to be found in it.

It was quite dark; the night was frosty, and, as is often the case at that period of the year, very foggy; the lights in the street lamps and the shop windows gleaming white and spectral-like, hardly penetrating at all into the thick air. Though it was early in the evening as yet—being that time between the day and the night when the night prowlers have not fully made their appearance—it looked a time when deeds without a name might be done without much risk of discovery, and particularly suitable for the kind of people who lived in that locality.

I had all my wits about me as I walked quickly along, and looked about for either of the people I had seen the previous evening near the shop in which



they had been drinking. I do not know why I did so, and in such a night when I could not see distinctly across the street, or for half a dozen yards on either side, it seemed a very foolish and hopeless task. At last I was attracted by the sound of coarse, brutal voices and oaths of a description I had seldom heard ; but one of the voices I had heard before, and I stood still before a shop window and waited till the speakers should pass. It was the man who had threatened to strike me coming along, accompanied by one of the city porters ; and as they walked they were chaffering about the price to be given for some job the porter was to do. I could not help noticing that, though the porter spoke frankly enough, yet it was in a low tone, and that his companion answered in the reckless, im-

patient manner of one wild with drink, with sometimes the appearance of being particularly cautious, and then the recklessness would get the mastery over him ever and anon, and there was an outburst of fearful profanity and brutal violence.

I could not help wondering, though I had no business with it, what a man like him could want with a porter. His accent told me he was an Irishman, and I knew quite enough of the low Irish to be well aware that they are not often the kind of people who employ porters to do work for them. Nor did this man seem other than one of the lowest of the low, and as ill-favoured a specimen as the eyes of man could look upon, with his repulsive air and sinister aspect.

I followed the two ; all thought of what the master would say quite lost sight of—



indeed, master, and shop, and comrades were all forgotten for the moment. I was determined to see what this would lead to, without knowing very well why, unless it was just boyish curiosity which prompted me to do it. So I loitered about the street; there were only a few people passing to and fro; the night was growing colder, too, and each turn I took up and down, I said within myself, should be my last, and then I should go away.

The couple had disappeared up one of the entries, not the one I had expected. At last I heard the sound of people in one of the closes, reckless, drunken voices again, and many of them, and I drew near to see what should happen. A party of men and women came out to the street, that I would not have cared to meet alone under any circumstances. They

were all evidently reeking with drink; the two men and two women who composed the party, and were carrying a box, which, when they got to the street, the porter took on his back and went away. It was an ordinary tea-chest, rudely covered and fastened, and not at all a suspicious-looking article; the people were certainly as disreputable a looking party as could be found anywhere, and suspicion might readily enough attach to them, and to their employing a porter to do such a paltry job.

I looked at the women carefully; they were both younger than the person I had noticed the previous night, and had the stamp of vice and vicious passions and indulgence deeply impressed upon them; along with the men they seemed to be greatly excited with drink. The men—the



comrades of last night—followed the porter closely, the women, at a little distance, followed them, just, it struck me, as if from the box some money was to be received, and each was determined to see that they were not cheated of their share of the spoil, and could not trust their neighbours.

They turned very speedily out of the main street up a lane which I had never been in before. I cannot tell what induced me to follow them; I felt fascinated under an influence, as if I were constrained by some higher power to fathom what these people were about. Even at the time, I remember, I reasoned with myself as to what I had to do with the concerns of a parcel of drunken Irish people, and what grounds I had for suspecting that they were about anything but

their ordinary lawful employments, which might not be so reputable as my own, but quite as honourable and necessary.

Alas! they were about their ordinary employment, sure enough, and that the most dreadful the world ever heard of, as the next few hours were surely to tell.

I could not give any analysis of my reasons for tracking these people, but perhaps the prime motive was boyish inquisitiveness. Every one knew that there were men in Edinburgh who trafficked in the bodies of the dead stolen from their quiet graves, and I was impressed somehow with the idea that these men and women were now on their way to dispose of some such ghastly cargo, and a horror-excited curiosity actuated me to make sure.

I tracked them through various quiet, out-of-the-way streets. They proceeded quite

recklessly and boldly, the porter only seemed to be quiet and cautious. The attention of the people they met was not, however, excited by their recklessness—or, if so, it was just to set them down as a lot of drunken vagabonds—Irish; a sight too common in Edinburgh to engage people's attention for long. At last I saw that they were drawing near to that series of small squares, and very quiet streets, which had then the reputation of being full of dissecting-rooms, and my heart beat more quickly as my faint suspicions seemed on the eve of being changed into certainties. But they still went on—alongside the college, crossing the wide street, the South Bridge in front, and entered a dull, gloomy street, which soon terminated in a square I did not know. This square was enveloped in darkness, and I could

not guess what kind of buildings there were in it, or what sort of people could dwell there; but, so far as the fog would suffer me to judge, the building to which the porter and the men went looked like some public place—some class-room or hall. Here a bell was rung, a door was partly opened, a whispered conversation took place, the box was carried into the hall, and the door was hastily shut and heavily fastened, as I could hear from the shooting of bolts and the clang of chains. A dispute of some kind seemed to occur between the porter and the men about the payment, and I heard that they had not the amount of five shillings, which he demanded; and then they all, porter and women too, set off in a body towards the southern part of the town; and I, all at once becoming

dreadfully conscious of the enormity of my offence, hastened away to the shop.

Had I known then what all Edinburgh was to know on the following day, I daresay I should have dared and done a great deal more than I did, in the way of sifting out this matter, for I was fairly on the track. I remember speculating curiously all that evening about the old Irishwoman I had seen with the two men on the former night, and I wondered I could not get her out of my mind.

Alas! it was the corpse of that same poor old woman that I had followed through these streets this night. That shabby tea-chest was all the coffin the poor unfortunate was designed to have by these ruffians, who acted now a strange parody, as it may be fancied, and followed to her last home, her whom, some twenty-

four hours before, they, by pressing invitations and hospitalities, had inveigled into their den, from which she was to issue on a porter's back for this journey to Surgeons' Square, and into Dr. Knox's dissecting-rooms.

CHAPTER XIV.

“WHAT has kept you, sir? Where on earth have you been?” were the first words I heard as I entered the shop; and then in a milder tone—“What is the matter with you? Has anything happened? You look, Steenie, just as if you’d seen a ghost!”

The speaker was our chief shopman, who took charge of us all when Mr. Chapman was not at home, and whose principal employment was to see that all of us did our work, and that the cus-

tomers were properly served and fully tempted to purchase. Now-a-days I fancy he would be called the shop-walker; but it is so long since I knew anything of the trade, that I cannot speak positively. He was a good young man, and I liked him very much. I felt very thankful indeed that it was to him I was to account for my delay this night, and not to Mr. Chapman, who would have dwelt on the enormity of my offence. I did not know that I looked scared and frightened till he spoke. I felt so, sure enough; but it was only after I went into the back-shop with him to account for the goods I had taken out, that, seeing my face in a glass, I found how terrified and pale and haggard I looked, and, though the night was cold, that the great drops of perspiration were standing



on my brow. True it is that only when

“The mind is free, the body’s delicate.”

“Why don’t you answer me, Andrew?” Mr. Foreman said again more sharply. “Has anything happened to you? You haven’t lost the money, have you?”

“I hope not,” I answered, quite breathless, and hardly knowing what to say.

“Then where in the name of fortune have you been?—why have you been so long?—why are you in this state? Come, sir, tell me the meaning of all this!”

“Well, I mean to do so; but give me a minute to breathe, Mr. Foreman. Oh! ye dinna ken what I’ve seen this night.”

“That’s just the very thing I want to know. You look as if you had lost your

wits. Give me the cash, however, and then perhaps you'll explain what all this means, and what has caused you to be in such a state. I'll have to tell Mr. Chapman, unless you give me all the better account of yourself, Andrew Ramsay."

I gave Mr. Foreman the money which I had received from the ladies at Meadowside; and then, growing a little more composed, I told him my story.

Mr. Foreman had heard of my escapade of the former night, and therefore easily understood my conduct. He had, moreover, lived so long in Edinburgh, that he knew all about the place into which I had seen the box taken, and quite enough of the practice of such places to give a good guess at its contents. Still he could see nothing more than that I had got a



glimpse of the horrible trade, and of the ruffians who carried it on. Perhaps no crime in which life was not sacrificed was regarded with such horror in Scotland as that to which his suspicions pointed; and no ruffians were so greatly loathed and execrated as the body-snatchers, who were in league with the anatomical lecturers; they were all the more detested, perhaps, because the law seemed quite powerless to put down the crime, and punish the criminals, as the popular indignation demanded. Even where individuals had been tried for violating the graves of the dead and found guilty, they had only been sentenced to a very moderate term of imprisonment, when the people would have rejoiced to see them hanged.

Mr. Foreman shared in these feelings, but he knew also that such things were

quite of common occurrence, and the only noticeable feature in the case to him was, that men should be bold and callous enough to go so openly through the streets with such a burden so very early in the night. Such deeds of darkness were generally shrouded under a deeper veil, and were guessed at by the people rather than known certainly. What I had seen soon circulated through the people in the shop; and such is the love of the horrible among people, that I was plied with questions on every hand, and I verily believe that every one of my neighbours regretted that he had not been the person who had been sent to Meadowside that night.

Things went on just as usual notwithstanding my transgression, only the shop being very slack, my neighbours had more

time than usual to gossip and to question me. Most of them vowed pilgrimages to Surgeon's Square, which, singularly enough, scarcely one of them knew anything of. Indeed I fully believe that but for the incidents of the night, I might have been in Edinburgh for twenty years and never should have found it out. Dr. Knox's name was well known as that of one of the most famous teachers of anatomy in the city, but none of us had ever cared to know much more about him. One generally likes to give a wide berth to dissecting rooms, and I remember well, both before and since that time, being very shy indeed of going through any of the dull streets around the college, which report said was the locality of the anatomical theatres and class-rooms. But the ignorance of the people was soon to be dispelled in a ter-

rible way, and the name of the great lecturer who occupied the building in Surgeon's Square was on the eve of being trumpeted forth throughout the world, not in the way of good fame and honourable renown, but as almost a hissing and reproach to the profession, to the city, and to the nation. For the first step was to be made that night in the revelation of the dreadful series of crimes which have cast all the other crimes of the generation into the shade; and in all of those murders he was assumed to have had a participation of some kind, though not, as it was said, any guilty knowledge.

Few crimes in my time have had such a sad notoriety in infamy as this series of murders had. The verb which has been added to the language sufficiently proves the deep impression which was made on

the public mind, and the horror and excitement which prevailed. All classes were roused, and even though it was afterwards ascertained that it was chiefly persons of the lost and degraded classes who had fallen victims to this system, and that it was in a great measure owing to their being drunken and vicious that they had become the prey of the murderers, yet this discovery alarmed all. The state of society it revealed was horrible to contemplate, and made people everywhere shudder. Science of the very highest character in its own sphere was shown to be in close and frequent contact and intercourse with the lowest and rudest barbarism, and gentlemen of a learned profession as having almost daily dealings with the most brutal and debased ruffians, and doing business with them in a way a marine store-dealer

dared not have done had they been selling him old iron. Putting aside the other strange facts so soon to be elicited, there was in the case of these scientific patrons of Burke and Hare, to say the very least, a very strange ignorance. Those very men who so readily, nay even eagerly, paid the murderers for the bodies of their victims, without one question being asked, would, as witnesses in a suspected case, profess to be able to tell the cause of death in almost any circumstances; consequently, one would think, they must have been quite well aware how those people had died, whether from natural causes or not. Even pass over that for a moment, they might, though not particularly observing the first cases, have had their attention called to those which so closely followed; but it was proved that time after time they paid, asking no

questions, for all that were brought to them; though, as the cause of death, and the means and method used were in each similar to those employed in the one before it, one cannot help wondering where their science was if they did not see anything wrong. It is quite clear, directly or indirectly, these Surgeon's Square people encouraged and incited the ruffians to commit fresh murders, however their conduct may be palliated, and though charity may induce us to free them from any really guilty knowledge. It was no wonder that Edinburgh was startled out of its propriety, and that a second Porteous Mob was apprehended, when the news spread over the city—which it did like lightning—that a regular system of murder had been discovered, to which the famous medical school, of which the citi-

zens were so proud, gave direct encouragement.

While my mind was yet full of strange speculations about what I had seen, and while we were preparing to close for the night, I observed a crowd of people coming down from the head of the West Bow. Our shop was not far from the police office, and though in those days none of the officers wore uniform, I had seen them going out and in so frequently, that I knew them quite well; so I soon made out that a party of constables, with some people in custody, formed the centre of the crowd. They were not the ordinary night watchmen either, but the criminal officers, showing that the men and women in their custody had been doing something very serious.

It was not a very extraordinary sight,

but somehow we all rushed to the door to see what was the matter; and then I saw, and was able to point out to my neighbours, the men I had seen on the two occasions, and their female companions, whom I had tracked to Surgeon's Square. Now they were in custody, nor had we long to wait to hear of what crime they were accused.

"What's the matter? What have they done?" Mr. Foreman asked one of the officers, the principal one, who frequently came about the shop. "What have they been about, Mr. L——?"

"Only murderin' a woman in the West Port, and sellin' her corpse to the doctors—that's a', Mr. Foreman," was the startling answer.

"Good gracious! and is't not plenty, too!" Mr. Foreman cried. "They'll be

the very folk one of our lads saw and followed to-night."

"Ay?" Mr. L—— looked alive and interested in a minute. "One of your lads to-night," he repeated. "Come away across, Mr. Foreman, for a minute, till I see about this."

CHAPTER XV.

So, then, there was more of truth in my speculations than my comrades had even dreamed of, and with the words yet ringing in our ears, "Only a woman murdered, and her corpse sold to the doctors—that's a'," I became at once a person of some mark for the time, because I had seen, and even suspected, that some crime had been committed. But the effect on myself was dreadful; for a little while I felt deadly sick, far more so than I had done during any

time of the past year's fever; and if I did not faint, I felt quite dizzy and powerless, and, Ned Davies said, looked as if I had done the deed myself.

I cannot describe the state of my mind when, like a flash of lightning, the image of the happy-like old woman that, only about twenty-four hours before, I had seen in high health and spirits following the man into the close, going, in truth, like a lamb to the slaughter, rose up before me. I had no doubt whatever that she was the victim; nor yet had I any now as to the contents of the box I had seen carried to Surgeon's Square; and I shuddered as I thought that one word when I saw her in life might have saved the poor unfortunate from death;—how fearful her death scene was, became fully known afterwards. My very brain reeled as I

thought of these things; and when Mr. Foreman returned, having told the chief officer all I had told my shopmates, with a message for me to go over to the police officer, I thought I could not stand it.

Up to this time the disposal of the body was the great difficulty—it was guessed at pretty shrewdly, but my evidence raised it to certainty. I put the officers on the right track; they were already aroused, and, like true sleuth-hounds, would doubtless have hunted out the fact in time; but what I told the officer set them out to find the porter; and a party, moreover, who took me with them to point out the place, proceeded at once to the dull little square, which was henceforth to have such an unenviable fame, there to search for the body of the victim. Once

the body was found, they could be more certain in their evidence.

I am not going to say much about the place in Surgeon's Square to which I was taken. I have no desire to see another place of the kind; the remembrance of what I saw, and what I felt then, haunted me afterwards for years, and all my life has prevented me from going to museums, which otherwise I should have liked much to visit. It is enough to say that the police were in good time; the box was found as I had described it, and, alas! my forebodings were only too true—there, too, was the body of the murdered woman, thrust in apparently in the rudest way by the brutal hands which had deprived her of life. Even a dog might have been more decently put away than their victim had been by these fiends.



My head was reeling, my heart was faint, and if the officers had not supported me, I must have fallen to the earth when I saw the dreadful sight. I was, however, soon able to say positively that it was the body of the same person I had seen in company with the two men who were now in custody; and then was led away, very glad to get out of the heart-sickening place into the street again, where the cool breath of the night wind soon restored me. Some of the men remained when I went away; and thus began the inquiries which resulted in the exposure of the appalling system which had caused so much anxiety and mystery, and so greatly terrified the good people of Edinburgh.

After the first dreadful feeling which this discovery originated in me had

passed away, I found out the notoriety I had obtained, very much to my disgust. I am not sure, however, that this notoriety, though it was very annoying to me, did not do me good, and certainly it helped to dispel the painful feelings, the almost self-accusations, I had suffered, as if I could have stayed the murderer's hand by a word, or so warned the victim that she would have escaped from the snare into which she was being led. He who cannot be famous is often anxious enough to obtain notoriety. It was a poor satisfaction, a strange, queer sort of fame, I fancied, to know a little more about the appearance of the parties in a foul crime than other people did—hardly even that, for it had to be proved yet, both that a murder had been committed, and that these men had done it. I could not away



with the idea that I should therefore be the object of envy, or that any one would willingly have taken my place, with all the horrors attendant on it, and the necessary appearances before the public which it entailed. Yet so it was, all my neighbours envied me my knowledge. I have often seen the same spirit manifested in my after-life, and have generally found that people were very willing to accept the momentary consequence, which, having been witness of some deed, famous or infamous, as the case might be, or having known some person about whom the public is interested, however disreputable the individual was, happens to bring them. I do not know whether I am a very bashful man, or, mayhap, a wise one, but I could never composedly stand any such notoriety.

In this case, however, I could not help myself. Notoriety was thrust upon me, like greatness on Malvolio. I was one of the witnesses against Burke and Hare, and therefore people—ay, even of that class one feels surprised should do so—came about the shop to see me, and to speak to me about what I knew. I was, of course, taken in hand by the Fiscal, and carefully examined; and my evidence being clear and definite, so far as it went, was considered valuable; but, as everybody should remember, it was one thing to be morally convinced of a thing, and quite another to prove it legally; so it was found that to prove these villains legally murderers, was going to be a very different thing indeed. It could be easily proved that this woman had been in their company, that she had



been murdered, and that they had sold her body; but to prove the deed was well-nigh an impossibility. Still more was this the case in regard to the other persons whose disappearance had caused so much alarm. They had been last seen with these men, perhaps even entering their house, and had never afterwards been seen alive; and, if they had been recognized by any of the students, they kept the secret well, so that there was nobody to prove that they had been murdered; or, if they had, who it was that had perpetrated the crime.

Here the delinquency of the people connected with Surgeon's Square was most conspicuous; for it came out that two well-known characters among the victims had been clearly recognized, and yet no one from that place had taken any notice of

the fact, though it was well known that search had been made for them through all Edinburgh. Even now, when the hue and cry arose, none of them came forward, and when surgeons, the most eminent in their profession in the land, proved, to demonstration, that this poor woman had been foully, and with great atrocity, murdered, these people still kept silence; the famous Doctor Knox himself—so ran the popular account, at least—resisting the officers of justice with arms in his hands. I cannot help wondering now, at this distance of time, as I have done all my life, how it came about that so much lenity was shown to these men, and why so much forbearance and consideration.

The ladies at Meadowside were dreadfully shocked, in common with all Edin-

burgh, at the terrible news, but still more so when they came to know all that I had seen while returning from their house. They were not at all above gossiping—indeed, rather liked it, even with a lad like me; so that when they heard that one of Mr. Chapman's lads knew a great deal of the main circumstances of the case, they came, and having had me sent out to their house again, they caused me to tell my story to them also. Perhaps that was the most important event that resulted from the notoriety I had obtained, and truly its effects were felt by me all my life, as my narrative in part will show. As the ladies are often to appear as I go on, perhaps I had better introduce them more particularly in another chapter by-and-bye.

Although there were no cheap news-

papers, nor even any daily newspapers at all—cheap or dear—published in Scotland in those days; though there was wonderfully little travelling, no railways, nor electric telegraphs, and very slow and expensive postal communications, the news of this terrible discovery spread with amazing celerity. One would think it impossible that it should spread so rapidly as now-a-days, or in any degree so quickly. It would be a mistake, however. The intelligence spread like wildfire. Edinburgh, and Leith, and the country around, were full of it immediately, and long before any of the semi-weekly papers had appeared, it had travelled over all Scotland, from Sark Brig to Cape Wrath, as if by magic; and everywhere people were dismayed and stunned with the news, as if it had been of a national calamity. A great crime, I be-

lieve, shocks a nation such as ours to its centre, quite as much as a great battle does, and greatly more than terrible calamities which are not crimes; and this, I think, was clearly evidenced by the absorbing interest which was excited by this awful series of butcheries in Edinburgh.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE Meadowside ladies I found out were named Misses Grahame and Burns. I had, in common with all the people in the shop, taken them to be sisters; they were of that class of spinsters who are called, too derisively, old maids. Though there was only a few years of difference in their ages, they were aunt and niece; but had long lived together in as close, and almost as true equality, as if they had been sisters.

They were a very nice, harmless, innocent, gossiping couple, who, in spite of

great apparent timidity, appeared to enjoy life very much ; and, save in the article of dress, were very sensible and prudent people. I was very much taken with their kindness to me the first time I saw them in their own house, all the more, perhaps, because I had formed a very different notion of them from the strict charge I had got not to leave the goods on any pretext, unless I got the money. It was clear that Mr. Chapman had been deceived by their appearance, for I am sure that he had set them down, from the way he spoke to me, as no better than they should be ; and that he thought them a couple of swindlers, rather than of decent, worthy people.

I could not describe the character of their dress better than by saying it was of that sort which slang people of to-day

would call very *loud*. Coal-scuttle bonnets and gigot sleeves, if I remember right, were then the fashion; and these ladies were coal-scuttled and gigotted to the very extremity thereof; but it was not so much the mode of their dress as their choice of colours for it, and the contrasts which they loved, or affected, that struck us most of all, and made us suspect that all was not as it should be with them.

I had found out my mistake as soon I entered their quiet and well-ordered house, which was both larger and better furnished than any I had been in the habit of seeing before, save some of the large mansions in the country, which it was a sight to see, the countryfolk said. There was an air about the house, too, of comfortable station and thorough re-

spectability, which one could not help noticing. In fact, I was forced to conclude that they belonged to the better class of Edinburgh society, who, if not numbered among the ranks of the landed gentry, yet moved, and were able to move, among people the most refined and polished. The house took my fancy greatly before I saw the ladies, but I was far more interested with them, they were so kind to me; and seeing at once that I was no vulgar *gamin*—I was by far too bashful and modest for even a town-bred boy of better class—that I was only lately come from the country, they did all they could to encourage me and put me at ease. Perhaps the mode in which my mother had trained me did me good service with them, for—though I may repeat what I

have already set down—I must say I was well brought up, and from my earliest years had been taught how to behave myself. I shall not say how much I appreciated the kindness of these excellent ladies at that time—I shall often enough have to do so as I go on.

Miss Grahame, the elder of the two by a few years, and the aunt of Miss Burns, was a lady of better than forty years of age. I have ever been the worst hand possible at guessing people's age, especially of womankind, so I may be mistaken—she may have been a few years more or less than that; any way, she confessed to being older than her niece—I could see no apparent difference—and our people set Miss Burns down as very little under two score. With feminines, however, on

the question of age, I have ever found it best to err on the safe side; with mankind, too—only one dare not say so publicly—it is the wisest plan.

Miss Grahame, who was come of a good family, was the daughter of a late professor in the university, and now resided here in her own house, having a very respectable income at her own free command. She was tall, well formed, and stout in person, and with a good, kindly, strongly-marked, thoroughly Scottish face; not particularly good-looking now, nor had she ever been, but still very fresh-coloured and comely, and with very little indeed of the faded looks which one so generally associates with the idea of old maids of a certain age. There was both kindness and humour too very easily discernible in her countenance, and a

sparkle in the keen grey eye which told of both spirit and energy ; while the firmness of the mouth said, as plainly as words could speak, that once certain she was right, and in the way of truth and uprightness, nothing earthly could make her flinch—she might be broken, but could never be bent.

We seldom associate kindly, genial characteristics with indomitable firmness ; but these traits were joined in the character of Miss Grahame of the Meadow-side, as well as clearly marked on her face ; and she was really what she seemed to be, an amiable, energetic, firm-minded lady, with only the one fault—her peculiar notions in regard to dress, if that could be regarded as a fault of character.

Miss Burns, her niece, was nearly as

tall as Miss Grahame, and had in a great measure the same kind of appearance. She had been a beautiful girl, and was now beautiful as a mature middle-aged woman; but the roses had withered on her cheeks, and she looked greatly more worn and time-scarred than her elder companion. Some women become stout as they grow older, but it was not so with Miss Burns—she was not positively and disagreeably thin, by any means; but it seemed as if she had lost substance, instead of gaining it, with advancing age. Her arm had lost its round fulness, and there were furrows becoming marked about the brow and eyes, and around the mouth, which imparted a more careworn aspect to her face than her aunt bore. Yet still her face was a fine one, and her features delicate and regular, though bear-

ing such a strong resemblance to her kinswoman as might well warrant people in reckoning them sisters. I have a notion that people who live constantly together, generally become very like each other, however different has been the original cast of their countenances. I do not say this is either an original or a correct hypothesis, it is only my notion—I fancy the resemblance between these two ladies might be owing as much to this life-long association as to anything else. They were certainly very like, save that the one had the marks of a clear, firm, decided character stamped upon her face; and the other, Miss Burns, had a most decidedly unready and timid expression impressed on hers, which made me think her more one to be ruled than to be a ruler. So timid did she appear, that you could not

help thinking that she must have at some time been dreadfully tried, and was continually in dread lest a similar temptation, perhaps a tempter, should spring up suddenly at her side, without giving her warning or time for preparation. But she was a very kindly, soft-spoken person, and very loveable, though wanting the heartiness of her more energetic kinswoman.

These ladies had been together all their lives. Miss Burns's mother, the elder sister of Miss Grahame, had taken charge of the latter when her parents died, while she was yet very young; and the parents of the younger lady having passed away, the aunt, a very young woman, was able to repay to the daughter the kindness she herself in like circumstances had received, and, though only a very few years older, had taken the guardianship of her orphan

niece, when she was left very slenderly provided for. Miss Graham had been mother, sister, friend to the girl; and so they had passed on through life in company, through the more perilous and more pleasant seasons, neither of them altogether escaping those trials which most people have to endure, but both coming out of the furnace more pure and fair than before, though one had to think of a plighted husband, dead on the field of honour, and the other closed her eyes, and prayed for strength, if she but heard his once honoured name, now associated with disgrace and scorn in the minds of men. It is often less painful to think of one dead, than dishonoured; so might be seen at Meadowside, in the open face of the one, and in the timid, shrinking glance of the other.

Now that all prospect of separation had departed, they seemed very contentedly to have made up their minds to pass the remainder of their lives together here. Whether there were no lurking hopes still remaining, may well be doubted; but the probability now was that only the most quiet and monotonous existence would be theirs, and that no rough breath from the outer world would ever henceforth ruffle the dead calm of their lives, save those every-day, common-place events of this life, which happen to all. That passion and strong excitements should agitate them personally evermore, no one for an instant could fancy. It seemed wholly irrational to imagine such a thing possible. But who can tell? Man proposes, but God disposes; and so there may be many changes

with these ladies yet, which are to try them to the uttermost.

Add to all this, that they were persons of strong principles, and most decidedly and sincerely pious, and you have their character complete. They reminded me of old Mr. Baxter, more than any person I had ever met; for their religion was an every-day matter, not a Sunday cloak, cast off when they came from church on Sunday. They were not like the American citizen,

“Who blacked with care his boots each Sunday,
Changed his shirt and put his coat on,
Shirt and piety together,
Keeping bright his Christian armour,
In the closet with his broad-cloth,
With his Sunday boots and broad-cloth;”

but wore their Christian armour, always bright, too, every day. I got a better and a truer idea of what genuine religion

was from these ladies than I ever got from any other source, and in this respect owe more to them than to any living being. It was their religion that made them so cheerful and happy, and, as I afterwards found, their faith alone that had sustained them in their past trials; and this, be it observed, was after that much-abused and vilified creed, Calvinism, or rather the doctrines which Paul set forth.

CHAPTER XVII.

THEY took a fancy to me, these Meadowsides ladies. I was, though I say it myself, a good-looking, handsome boy, well grown and active ; and then I had been well drilled at home, and was the very reverse of forward or impudent. So first of all it came to pass that they, being anxious to hear all about my adventures in the West Port, came purposely to the shop, and got me sent home with them to carry their purchases, only I was not at all hurried this time, but had leisure to tell them all I knew. It

was almost the only pleasant thing which happened to me on account of my having seen the villains, and it led to an intimacy which was very pleasant; and though we did not stand towards each other exactly as

“A pair of friends, though I was young,
And Matthew seventy-two,”

our friendship, so far as age and station were concerned, was almost as incongruous, and quite as real. Indeed it had an effect on all my future life. For this visit was the precursor of many, and the beginning of a new era in my life in every respect.

Miss Graham had a greater share of curiosity than her niece, and was much more energetic withal; so when she had heard all that I could tell her, and had got over the feelings of indignation and

horror which the story, especially that part which related to finding the murdered woman, caused, she began to question me more quietly about myself and my own friends.

Miss Grahame set about this very methodically, commencing with my name, which she had quite sufficient of romance about her to admire very much, when she heard that it was Andrew Ramsay; and then step by step she got all my little history, and that of my family, so far as I cared to give it. Indeed she questioned me so pleasantly, that I do not think I could have withheld any particulars; but really there was so very little to tell, and still less to keep back, that I believe she acquired a very fair notion of our family, from my father downwards to little Susie. It was the



only mode, this one of questioning, to keep up any sort of conversation with me then. It was very pleasant to me to be with such nice agreeable people, and I cannot now tell how much I appreciated their kindness; but unless I had been catechised as I was, I am pretty sure that I should never have been able to say a single word for myself. At last, when I had told her all about where my people lived, and let her perceive that we were an affectionate and kindly family—

“How do you manage on the Sabbath, Andrew?” Miss Grahame asked. “It must be very tiresome to go out so far—but perhaps you go out on the Saturdays?”

“How are you able to go to church when you have got home?” Miss Burns

added. "It is a great distance from church, if I remember rightly—is it not, Andrew?"

"Mr. Chapman disna allow us apprentices to gang hame often," I answered. "Once in the six weeks, or there away, I get away, and then I can stop till the Monday mornings. The nearest kirk, ma'am, is about three miles away; but I dinna gang ony way the day I get hame."

"Oh! that is very wrong—very wrong indeed!" Miss Burns answered, shaking her head. "But on the Sabbaths you're in town, where do you go then?"

"To the High Kirk, ma'am," I answered. "My maister has a seat there for us lads, and expects us a' to attend regular. If we dinna, he has something to say to us at tea-time, that nane o' us likes."

Miss Grahame laughed, both at her niece's prettily-expressed horror at my Sabbath-breaking propensities when I went home, and of Mr. Chapman's mode of making us Sabbath-keepers while in town. Miss Burns, on the contrary, very gravely, yet with great apparent satisfaction, said,

"That's right; I'm very glad to hear that, for the doctor is a good man; but how do you spend the rest of the day, after the church is over?"

"Whiles I read, ma'am, whiles I take a walk to the Calton Hill, or gang up to the Castle, and sometimes to a friend that lives in the New Town; but we maun aye be hame by eight o'clock—Mr. Chapman is very strict about that."

"I'm very glad to hear that," Miss Grahame said with some emphasis; "do

you read much, Andrew? What kind of books do you like best?"

"I havena muckle time to read, ma'am," I answered, "except on the Sundays; I'm aye far ower tired at night for that. It's maistly the Bible that I read then, sometimes a bit out o' a good book; but I dinna mind about reading sermons, though it's only on a Sabbath night I can get time to read at a'."

"But you have not told me what kind of books you like best and better than sermons, Andrew?" Miss Grahame asked again.

When I was at home I used to read anything I could get my hands upon, even the books about my father's business, which were full either of the dry details of legal verbiage which special acts of parliament delight in, or of long

tables of abstruse calculations. I have read even Mrs. Glass's famous cookery book many times, so that I could give them a pretty general answer, but I ended by saying I liked stories best of all.

Both the ladies laughed heartily at the idea of a boy like me devouring Mrs. Glass's book. It was certainly rather a strange one, but I remember doing so quite well, and being very much interested, indeed, about the directions she gives for making hare-soup. I have since seen first rate hare-soup made where her first requisite was not attended to, and its substitute was only the scart, or cormorant, so common in our northern seas. Very possibly it was desperation that drove me to these books at first, but from my earliest years I

read everything I could get my hands upon.

“I would like very much if you would come out here and see us on the Sabbath evenings, Andrew,” Miss Grahame said at last; “perhaps you won’t like to be with two old women like Phemie and me, but we both would like much if you would come when the church comes out in the afternoon, and take tea with us; maybe you may see younger folk than us here sometimes. What do you say, Andrew?—will you come?”

I stammered out my thanks as I best could; I was, in fact, quite confused with the honour. What a difference indeed there was between that handsome, well-lighted room and the little den underground, filled up with two beds and three great chests, to the complete ex-

clusion of chairs and tables, which was the boy's room in Mr. Chapman's house, where our only candlestick was a piece of wood with a hole bored in it, and the only other place we could go to was the kitchen, a large cheerful place certainly, but oh! how different from this! It was a great honour to one like me, and, even though I had not been so greatly pleased with the ladies themselves, I should have been much rejoiced at it, because of the pleasure I knew it would give my mother to hear of her son being so soon taken notice of.

"So you will come—well, I am very glad of that," Miss Graham continued. "It is not likely we shall be altogether alone always, remember, but we'll be very glad of your coming."

"Yes, and you must learn to make

yourself at home," Miss Burns added, "and to like us, though we are only two old women."

I answered, shyly enough, that I should not need to learn that, for I did it already; and so I did like them, both really and truly. Well, I promised faithfully to come next Sunday to tea, and went away, my heart beating high with pleasure, and my imagination picturing the pleasant hours I should pass with them; for though clearly highly educated, and used to people of learning and intelligence, they were not so much taken up with the more lofty, that they could not descend to the level of a poor country boy like me—they seemed to like to do so rather. As I afterwards found out, they had no near kindred, and had never known intimately any one like me; their

acquaintances were mostly women, and for years they had seen few of the other sex, save those they must see in the way of business. I learned this partly from the servants, one of whom, a staid, grave personage, in an immense "mutch," white as snow, and of an antediluvian fashion, which was the most characteristic article of her dress, had been with Miss Grahame all her life; the other a young girl, a sort of better kind of servant, a waiting-maid, was quite delighted to hear that I was to come on Sunday, if only for the novelty of having a callant in the house. I was not above making friends with her, for all I was so likely to be intimate with her mistresses; and, from her account, I was inclined to fear that the house on Sundays was a rather dull and precise one, and that my coming would

be in some measure a relief to her; but she was called away before I could learn more. From old Tibby it was needless to expect to hear anything, for though as arrant a gossip as any in Edinburgh, she was silent on all that concerned her ladies, save the things of every day.

On my way home, I debated with myself what I should do—whether I should tell my shopmates or not of this invitation till the Sunday afternoon; and, after full consideration, and to my great after annoyance, I resolved to do it. I never could—I can hardly do it yet—keep quiet about little things like that, which might happen to myself. I often, now-a-days, fear that people set me down as very garrulous, because I speak so plainly and openly about most things, such as what I am going to do or have done;

but I do not think I am garrulous, for all that. I know this, however, that others, and even those who forsooth call themselves my friends, are not so frank and open with me.

Well, when I got to the shop I was catechised pretty smartly, and put through a good "heckling," as we say in Scotland, by my comrades, as to what the old ladies had had to say to me. Had I been engaged about matters of life and death, instead of gossip, I could not have been more thoroughly cross-examined. They were curious to hear about the people, and the house they lived in—what they wanted with me specially, and how I had got on with them—and they badgered me till I was quite sick of their questions. I quite astonished them, however, by describing the house, and the style

in which the ladies lived. I thought that the best possible way of stopping their disrespectful manner of speaking about them as the two "old maids." But when—with a great deal of pride and self-consequence, I have little doubt—I mentioned that I was to go there to tea next Sunday, I was well nigh completely overwhelmed by their ridicule, as I had been at first by their curiosity. I was set upon on quite a new tack—Why was I to go? what was I going to do? whom was I to see? And when I answered with hesitation, because I did not know myself, a perfect storm of railing mockery and ironical congratulations was poured out upon me. Even in bed at night I had no peace. Ned Davies, being my bed-fellow, would insist on keeping up the fun, as he reckoned it, till I kicked

him out of bed on to the floor, which exploit made him change his tune for the time. When it was known generally over the shop, it seemed a prime joke to them all, and they would have it that Miss Grahame had fallen in love with me; and various of the older men, drawing themselves up, and pulling out their scraps of whiskers, wondered at her taste in asking a boy like me to her house, when such well-favoured individuals as themselves, who would only have been too happy to go, had been passed over.

I had not learned then that the best way to disarm people, such as my shop-mates, is to pay no attention to them. "Jonk an' let the jaw gae bye," is a proverb worth remembering, and I was not very long in getting an inkling of it. I tried the other way, and attempted to

stop the tongues of my fellow-apprentices *vi et armis*, and gave them a good thrashing, in recompense for their jibes and sneers and mocking of me. But this plan only made them quiet for a very little while, and as soon as the thrashing was over, Ned Davies was at it again. At last, by telling them that it was only because they were envious of my good luck—the fable of the sour grapes over again—that they annoyed me so, and taking as coolly as I could what they said, I obtained some respite, and could begin to look forward to my visit with something like complacency, which, while the storm lasted, was hardly possible. Indeed, so annoyed was I for a time, that I would have given something to have had no such invitation at all, and blamed myself very much for having been so simple as to make it known.

On the Saturday we had a visit of the ladies once more at the shop. Their coming created quite a sensation now, and everybody was anxious to see them, and those who were at leisure were like to quarrel with each other as to who should serve them. But all the shopmen were disappointed; they only wished to see Mr. Chapman. What passed at the interview in the back shop nobody could tell; whether it related to me I did not know, and of course, after the invitation they had given me, I was very desirous to find out whether it did or not. Whatever their business was, I did not escape a fresh outburst of ridicule from my comrades, for they would have it that the ladies had come to ask if it would be safe to have me to their house, and that they "rued" already that they had invited me. But whatever it was, and what-

ever they had said about me to the master, did me no harm, either with themselves or him. They spoke to me kindly as they went away, saying they hoped to see me to-morrow; and by-and-bye Mr. Chapman himself very graciously told me that he was glad I had found such good friends, so I inferred that they had come to ask specially that he would let me go. A master who did not allow his apprentices to go home on Sundays might well prevent them going elsewhere without his special permission, and I found out afterwards that to ask that permission was their special business that day. A great deal more than I ever deserved all my life was this kindness, and for long after it stood me in good stead with Mr. Chapman.

CHAPTER XVIII.

I PASSED the remainder of that week in a very queer state of expectancy—full, partly, of shy fear, partly of anticipated pleasure. Notwithstanding the torture to which I was subjected, I believe such was the state of my mind. And when the Sunday came, I remember well it was not a great deal of attention I could give to the preachers, either forenoon or afternoon—my mind was away at Meadowside, speculating busily on how I should get on, and various qualms passing through it, as to how I should be able to conduct myself.



I am not at all sure that I have ever been in a similar state of mind since, so pleasurable, yet so fearful.

However, I was resolved to be punctual, and when the afternoon service was over, I immediately set off for Meadowside. I do not know what induced me, whether the fact of its being Sunday, and because I was dressed in my best blue jacket and trousers, or what else I cannot now remember, but I did not go by the old route of the Grassmarket and the West Port, I took the longer way, round by the Meadows. I remember well I had to pass the College, and the end of the street leading to Surgeon's Square; and up to that point I was accompanied by my two fellow-apprentices, who had not been able during the week to go so far, and were bent on seeing the place where the

now notorious Doctor Knox presided. Nor were they alone in this desire, as it soon enough appeared. Morbid curiosity had drawn the people from all parts towards the same centre, so that the square itself was densely crowded, and the streets around, as far as the bridge, blocked up and nearly impassable. All Edinburgh seemed to have turned out, and the feeling among the people, as could be very easily gathered from the look of their faces, and the remarks they were making to each other, was of the deepest and most vengeful nature against "the doctors," quite as much as against the true murderers. A mere spark at that moment would have set the people in a flame. Newly come out of church as most of them were, the atrocity of the crime, the deep-rooted loathing and hatred of the system which



had made such crimes possible, had roused the people to such a pitch, that the merest breath would have set them fairly on fire. In the West Port, the scene of the murder, it was quite as bad, for the lowest rabble of the city had gathered and sweltered there all day long, filling the public-houses, and creating scenes almost as horrible as those in which the great miscreants had revelled.

When parted with my comrades in the crowd at the College, I went away on my special visit; and as I was going along, in front of Heriot's Hospital, I saw tripping before me a nicely-dressed girl. I did not know any young people in Edinburgh, save some distant relations of my mother's, and certainly none of the girls of that household could by any possibility look like the girl before me, let them try ever

so hard ; but somehow I thought I ought to know the figure and the walk, and when I got near enough to catch a side glimpse of the face, it, too, seemed familiar. I was hardly yet come to the time of life for paying much heed to the lasses, but the six months I had been in Edinburgh, in Mr. Chapman's shop, had wonderfully developed my ideas in that direction, and I was already beginning to notice, with more attention than I should have done, I dare say, the pretty faces and handsome figures that I saw. A shop such as ours is a wonderful hot-house for forcing such notions, and the usual current of thought, at least of speech, among our class of shop-people is very much more in the way of criticising or admiring womenkind than is generally supposed.

Any way, I had begun to like to see a handsome girl, and I looked at this one, who was undeniably so, with great admiration and interest, and with a strong desire also to speak to her, and find out who she was—which was not at all lessened when I got a full view of a face which smiled upon me in innocent pleasure as I came close up. I could not tell who she was, but I put out my hand to meet hers, and blushed all over as I did so—I have rather a contemptible habit of doing so to this day—and felt the soft firm fingers clasping mine, but still I could not name her.

“Ah! you don’t remember me,” she said, in a very sweet voice, with a pretty English accent; “I knew you in a moment. You are quite strong and well now, I see.”

Then there flashed upon me the Riding of the Marches at Errol, and the little girl who kept me company at the window, and had been so much amazed at my illness, and so sympathetic with me, and I shook the hand which she had not withdrawn again and again.

"I mind now," I cried, "I mind Eastfield; I saw you at Eastfield—you're Miss Leslie, are you not?"

"Yes; Mary Leslie, not miss; I'm the youngest—Lizzie's miss," she replied, laughing. "Do you live in Edinburgh now?"

"Oh! yes, I've been for a good while. I'm in a shop now in the Lawnmarket. But I thought you'd gone to England?"

"But I've come back again, you see. Father has come back to Edinburgh for

good. We have only been back a few days. Have you been at Eastfield lately?"

"No, Mary, I dinna get out often; but I'll gang there the first time, and tell them I've seen you. Do you live out this way?"

I was so taken with the sweet face that looked so pleased at having recognised me, that I could have gone off to Eastfield on the instant if it would have given her pleasure.

"Oh! no, we live on the South side; we lived there before, and mother liked it, so we've gone back near to the old place. You'll know Newington very well?"

"Yes."

But my heart sank the while. Newington in those days was mostly tenanted

by people far wealthier than any I could ever hope to become acquainted with.

“Well, we live in Newington, in one of the cross streets; but I shall not be much at home. I am going to learn to be some thing—at least my aunts advise that.”

“Have you an aunt in Edinburgh, then? I thought you were English people?”

“Yet our name is as Scotch as your own, isn’t it? Leslie is just as much so as Ramsay, I fancy. But I should not say aunts, either, for they’re only distant relations of my father’s, and they’re very Scotch—we call them aunt for shortness, and because they like it better than miss, or any other name we could give.”

“Oh! Well, and what are you going to learn? To be a governess, or what?”

“I don’t know yet, but I hope soon to know. Are you going far this way?”

“Only a little bit. I’m invited to tea in a house just round the corner, in Meadow-side,” I answered, rather sheepishly, yet with much pride.

“So am I; my aunts live there—I haven’t seen them since we came back, though Lizzie has. Oh! they’re such a dear old couple!”

I began to feel strangely. Could it be possible that we were both going to the same house, and my ladies be those Mary Leslie called her aunts, and such a dear old couple?

“Well, Mary, so are the ladies I’m ga’en to see; they’ve been very kind to me, and

I never saw them till about a week ago. Miss Grahame is——”

“Miss Grahame!—Miss Grahame!” Mary cried—“why, are you going to see Miss Grahame?”

“Yes, indeed.”

“Oh! that’s so nice. Miss Grahame is father’s friend—Miss Burns too; but Miss Grahame’s the nearest. They’re much higher and richer people than we, but oh! so kind as they have been to me!”

“And to me, who am no a drap’s bluid to them. Just fancy, Mary, ladies like them thinking onything o’ a boy like me, and taking notice o’ me, because I’m so far frae hame on Sundays!”

“It’s just like them. When were you home, and how are your mother and sisters?”

“Oh! very well. I get out very seldom, but I hear most every week—there’s aye somebody in on the market-days. Do you mind yon grand horse the champion rode?—such a lang time as it looks since then, to be sure!”

“Yes, quite well; but what has happened with the horse that you ask such a question?”

“Oh! naething, only speaking of the market-day put him into my head, and because Captain killed a man the very week after the play.”

“How dreadful!—and he had killed two before, you told me, hadn’t he? Was it the man who rode him that day?”

“Oh! no, Mary; it was the carter who used to drive him, you may mind—I pointed him out to you.”

It had seemed to me once or twice as

if Mary Leslie was wondering at the crowds of people we were meeting, and was about to ask what could be the cause, so I was glad to speak of anything to keep her off from noticing them particularly. These crowds had not at all the easy, cheery look which people usually have on Sundays when kirk time is over; they had, on the contrary, a fierce, abhorrent aspect, as if they had been engaged either as spectators or actors in some dreadful tragedy. I managed as best I could to keep up a stream of small talk, and kept away from the dreadful subject, with which all the country was ringing. I would not have done this with my sister Menie, nor any other of our own people, but I feared to be questioned by Mary Leslie. I knew there would most likely be quite enough of it to sicken anyone at



Edinburgh when we were in the house of Miss Grahame.

Mary and I entered the house together, to the great wonderment of old Tibbie, who opened the door, and the equal surprise and delight of the ladies, when they found out that we had met before. They were not alone, and while Mary was away to take off her bonnet and shawl, I was introduced to an elderly man, a rather shabbily dressed individual, who smelt strongly, I thought, of whisky, but had an air polished and gentlemanlike, such as one does not often meet with in such a shabby coat, which has a strong odour of drink; he was called Sir William, and really was one of the oldest Scottish baronets. Just fancy a boy of fifteen, brought up as I had been, introduced to a baronet! True, Sir William was a

poor man, and held some little employment in a Government office in the city, of eighty or ninety pounds a-year; and he was kept poorer still, because he had flown to that most fallacious and dangerous comforter—strong drink, to drown the sense of humiliation, of lost dignity, which his meanly-paid employment forced upon him.

Miss Grahame had known him all her life, and while she lamented his weakness and infatuation, and ofttimes heartily scolded him about it, she still insisted that he should come as often as possible, and treated him ever with as marked consideration and respect as if his title had the estate to correspond.

Sir William, a baronet, and, as he imagined, the true heir to one of the lapsed earldoms in the Scottish peerage,

was not a person that could be met every day; it was only on Sundays and in this house that he appeared the long-descended gentleman; all the other days of the week he was the humble clerk, liable to be snubbed by low-bred fellows, who were just a step above him in office rank, and a hundred miles below him in every other respect. In his office, though his rank was well known, and his neighbours rather prided themselves on having the long-descended gentleman amongst them, he never presumed on his title. To the public he was the most polite and civil person in the office, having none of that rude bearishness which seems to me to be the chronic characteristic of small officials of all kinds. I found out most of this afterwards, when I saw that he was a constant

visitor of my two ladies on the Sabbath days. To-day, of course, he had come to talk over the fearful discoveries which had been made during the week, and he seemed especially pleased when he heard that I could tell somewhat of the affair with which all men's thoughts for the time were engaged.

But it was far pleasanter to me to be with Mary Leslie, than speaking even to a live baronet. So I rejoiced when, having told him how I had tracked the villains, I was permitted to draw back beside Mary. The elder people then began to moralise about the dreadful crime, all setting it down as a manifest proof of how greatly the times had degenerated, and, Miss Burns especially, as a clear token that the beginning of the end was drawing nigh. They were soon deep

in the catalogue of our national sins, and the evidences which proved that certain special acts were sins of that kind, which brought about a religio-political discussion of the Catholic Emancipation Act; and this murder, with all its attendant horrors and revelations, was a fitting commentary on the wisdom of that great measure—at least Miss Burns thought so, for were not three out of the four accused persons arrant Papists?

Leaving Sir William to fight his own battle with the ladies, Mary Leslie and I got into a corner by ourselves, where there were a few books, most of them certainly dry and heavy enough to frighten anybody from trying to read them. I remember there was Jonathan Edwards on the Freedom of the Will, Elisha Coles on God's Sovereignty, and various other



works of that extremely able and unanswerable character, whose metaphysics, however clear and convincing to a theologian, were yet dreadfully dull, heavy, and dry to the like of us.

But there was one book there to which we were both drawn; it was a large Bible, of a famous old edition, quite full of plates, finer than anything I had ever seen before. Illustrated books, in the modern sense of the words, were then almost entirely unknown, and the engravings in family bibles were generally hideous in the last degree. But this copy, even to a cultivated taste, would have been precious, and to us that night it was a perfect treasure.

We got very intimate, Mary and I, over this book; and, as we had to sit close together, that each of us might see

the pictures, we were soon liker brother and sister than comparative strangers. We conversed in low tones about the various scenes represented, sometimes Mary and sometimes I reading the passages, and guessing out the characters.

Mary had some slight knowledge of art; her father, being a good draughtsman, had, it appeared, taught his girls to draw, and I only knew so much of the art that I liked pictures, and could point out such figures as I thought true, provoking Mary's low sweet laughter more than once by the simplicity—perhaps it would be better called the naïveté, of my remarks.

But we got on famously, and the time flew so rapidly away that I was quite startled when I found that eight o'clock,

the hour at which I should have been in my master's house, had come. Miss Grahame relieved me of my fear of a scolding, however; she had actually begged that I should be permitted to stay till nine, a considerate kindness which made my heart swell and my eyes fill. As Mary was to go home, too, a tray with biscuits was brought, and a glass of wine was poured out for each of us, which we were to take before we went away.

I had seen some of the evils of drinking, and I knew quite enough of the danger people incurred through indulgence, and so, greatly to the amazement of the ladies, I begged to be excused. Of course I was, and was even commended by Sir William for my expressed resolution; but

Mary Leslie, though she took none herself, laughed at me, and asked me if I was a son of Jonadab the son of Rechab.

Total abstinence was almost an unknown thing in those days; nobody would be much amazed at a boy of fifteen of the same class refusing a glass of wine now.

It seemed, when we were ready to go away, that Sir William, old, and shabby, and whisky-smelling as he was, had agreed to see sweet Mary Leslie home; but greatly to his satisfaction, and much more so to hers, I begged and obtained leave to do it; and so I escorted her through the now quieter streets, with a pleasure I had never felt when walking with anybody before, and with much greater pleasure to

herself, I have no doubt, than if she had been under the charge of the old man, baronet though he was.

CHAPTER XIX.

AFTER that first Sabbath at Meadowside, it came about that I spent nearly all my Sundays and holidays there, except those days on which I went home. Mary Leslie was very generally my companion; once or twice indeed, during the winter, her sister, the true Miss Leslie, came in her place, and those were to me days of great discomfort and annoyance.

Lizzie Leslie was a nice enough girl, two or three years older than Mary, and assuming the appearance, as she had long before assumed the manners of a grown

woman. If I had been less taken up with Mary, I daresay I should have thought a great deal of Lizzie, a great deal more than I really did, any way. People say that boys always prefer the society of girls older than themselves; but though I grant the truth of this as a general rule, it was not the case with me. Mary Leslie was to me before all others, as a friend, a playfellow, or even a counsellor; and that special corner in the drawing-room to which we could retire each Sunday night, and the great old Bible with the pictures, are as deeply impressed on my memory as the image of Mary herself.

One Saturday I proposed calling on Miss Grahame. I had been out past Meadow-side on an errand from the shop, and as I came to the gate, I saw a scene which

is still so vivid, and in which Mary was the chief actor, that it passes before my mind's eye as clearly now as if it were but an occurrence of an hour ago.

The winter had fairly set in, a true old-fashioned Scottish winter, and the ground was covered pretty deeply with snow. Snowballing, ever a favourite amusement with all classes in Edinburgh, was going on everywhere. I had been assaulted at twenty different points by well-disposed boys and girls, and pelted till out of their range or district. The same sort of sport was going on in the front garden at Meadowside. Mary Leslie, her two brothers, and the young servant lass, were at it merrily and heartily—the sturdy boys, of course, having by far the best of it, so far as fair warfare went, but no matches for the girls, who caught



them every now and then, and, to their great delight, rolled them over and over amid the snow.

When I came up they were all somewhat out of breath, and Mary and the young servant were standing looking very tired, while the imps of boys were improving the time of truce by providing ammunition for a fresh onslaught. The parley was of short continuance; they attacked Mary first, and a well-aimed ball of the frosty feathery snow which the eldest threw, knocked the bonnet off her pretty head, and left exposed the masses of her deep glossy raven hair, on which, like a silver star, a quantity of the light flaky snow glistened. It was a very pretty picture, and I shall not easily forget it.

Mary Leslie was then a tall handsome

girl of fourteen, but looking older, with a fine face, and a singularly clear and transparent complexion, through which, in ordinary times, you could see the blood flashing with each varying emotion; the eyes were a deep brown black, and full of fire and life. It was a lovely face, though strong and decided in every feature, and at that moment the cheeks were glowing with colour, the effect of the exercise in the frosty air; the tresses, which had been nicely braided, as I could easily see, were now somewhat out of order; and the snowy star shining out from these glossy braids gave me the idea of some poet's fancy, rather than that of an every-day girl.

Yet Mary Leslie, busy preparing herself for the work of teaching, and already, as a poor man's daughter should be, pretty

fairly acquainted with the work and cares of a poor man's household, was not by any means a girl to be fallen in with everyday. Certainly I did not think so that morning. She seemed to me surpassingly beautiful, as I stood looking on at the gate, with the intention of watching and admiring rather than taking any part in the fun.

But Mary soon recognised me, and the glow on her cheeks spread in a rapid blush over all her face, dyeing the rosy cheeks with a still warmer colour than before; but whatever feeling caused the blush, it soon gave place to the fun of the moment, and before I could speak, while I was still standing admiring her, she assailed me with the snowy missiles, and was joined heartily in the onslaught by the others.

Of course it was a fair challenge. I stood my ground, and we had a battle-royal. All of them joined against me, which ended in my being ignominiously defeated and captured, and having my face washed with the snow, amid the shouts of the boys, Isabel, the servant-girl, holding me down, while Mary herself performed the operation.

It was not the pleasantest possible operation for a boy to undergo, but I could have stood anything, I fancy, in which Mary Leslie was an actor, and I myself the object of the action.

I had to call that day to say that, having to go home, I could not pay my usual visit on Sunday; and while I said so, and even while the good ladies were congratulating me on being so soon to see my mother—for by this time they



well knew how dearly I loved her—I could not help watching Mary. I noticed with some surprise at first, I must confess, a strange shadow pass over her face, which soon settled down upon it, as if she was displeased or mortified at what I had said, though she also intimated how glad she was that I was going home.

I do not remember whether pleasure or disappointment was the most predominant feeling with me—I suppose pleasure; for all of us, boys as well as men, like dearly to be of some consequence, and I presume I am just like my neighbours in this respect—therefore, that Mary Leslie's annoyance and evident disappointment pleased me, I have not now a doubt. I know I should have been dreadfully annoyed if she had gone away, and I had been so



every Sunday that she had not come to Meadowside when I was there.

It was my first visit home, since I had attained the unenviable notoriety of having been a witness to some little part of the Burke and Hare tragedy. I had written to my mother pretty fully when I sent out my clothes to be washed on the Wednesday, and knew they would all of them be very inquisitive about this part of my experience of a city life. Our people at home were not above loving gossip, and, though they got the *Saturday Evening Post* when it was only two days old, and so would know a great deal more about these dreadful murders than most people in the country, I was quite prepared for the storm of questions which were to pour down upon me.

The other subject, as it proved, was

much more interesting to my mother, and I had to describe the ladies at Meadowside most minutely, as regarded their appearance, dress, the house they occupied, the servants they kept, the style in which they lived, and a score of other particulars besides. My mother was very proud that a son of hers should be noticed by people of good station—she was of a good old family herself, and felt it all the more—and earnestly and emphatically did she counsel and advise me about my behaviour. I sometimes fancy now that she was even more earnest and emphatic then than she had been in her charge to me when I first went into the city to business.

It was a great matter in her opinion that I should have such a good house to go to on the Sabbath days; and she

told me of a brother of her own, poor Uncle George, who was ruined for this life utterly, just for the want of it, driving him into company on Sundays, which was at first discreditable, and soon led to his complete destruction.

Menie, of course, was far more taken up with my young acquaintance, Mary Leslie. Menie was come to those years when it might be expected the lads should be looking after her, and so could take a view of our singular friendship which neither Mary nor I at that time, I am quite sure, ever thought of. Menie knew something about Mary, and had seen her at Eastfield, and she made me give an account of what Mary was like to the full as minute and particular as that which I had given to my mother regarding the Meadowside ladies had been ;

but when she heard that Mary was learning hard to fit herself for being a governess, she cried out,

“Oh! Steenie, and me here idle at hame! I’ve been wishing and wishing for years to learn something—d’ye no think I should try and learn to be o’ some use, too?”

“What’s put that into your head, lassie?” my mother asked rather sharply; “are na ye o’ great use to me as it is?”

“I dinna ken. But I fancy it would be a hantle better for me to be in some way to make my own bread, and no aye be a burden on you, mother. The Leslies are better off than we are, and count themselves richer, and yet Mary’s learning to be a governess for a’ that.”

“Ay, Menie,” I said, “but I dinna think ye could be a governess, or ony

way learn to be one, sae easy as Mary Leslie can."

"Maybe no," she answered, "and I dinna want to be one. But there's mony things that women do, and that girls learn to do, forbye teaching. I could be a dressmaker, and would rather be that than a governess. Mother, will ye no let me gang to learn?"

"Hout, lassie, ye've nae need—ye've time enough yet for that, ony way."

"Ay, but, mother, so ye've aye said, and so for years ye've put me off," Menie answered; "I wish you'd let me gang now, when there's Steenie in the town, too."

"Weel, weel, lassie, dinna bother me ony mair i' the noo; ye dinna mind it's the Sabbath, surely; we'll speak about that again. Gie puir Steenie some rest,

and him to gang away sae early the morn."

"But I might gang in wi' him; Miss Elspeth's aye needing sewers, and couldna I learn as weel wi' her as onybody else?"

Miss Elspeth Ramsay was a distant relation of my father's, about whom we did not know much more than that she was a rather eccentric, elderly person, who kept herself by dressmaking, with whom, however, my mother was on more friendly terms than with the other members of my father's family. I did not know much more about her than her name, and that her house was in an obscure part of the old town; and, consequently, I inferred that her business could neither be a good nor a respectable one, and so not a fit place for Menie. Somehow we young

people had jumped at once to the conclusion that Menie was to go at once to be something.

“Miss Elspeth’s wouldna do,” I said. “Ye should gang, Menie, to some o’ the fine places in the new town, if ye’re to gang ony ways. The foot o’ the Canon-gate is no fit for the like o’ you.”

“Now, bairns, you’re no to say ony mair about the like o’ this the now,” my mother spoke authoritatively. “If it be right and proper, Menie’ll gang to learn to do something. I’ll see what your father says about it. But if she was to go, it would just destroy your happy Sabbaths at once, Steenie.”

“How, mother?” I cried. “I fancy it would make them all the pleasanter instead of that.”

“Why, laddie, dinna ye see that Miss

Grahame wouldna ask ye if she knew ye had a sister ye could be with. Ye dinna expect that your ladies are to fall in love wi' Menie, too, do ye, all at once?"

"Oh! I didna think o' that; but Miss Grahame's sure to ask Menie too, as soon as she hears about her."

"Weel, weel, I'm not so sure o' that; but we'll see what your father says."

Thus were we dismissed at that time by my mother, but neither Menie nor I was at all inclined to let the idea pass away; and her going to Edinburgh to learn a business formed the principal topic of our conversation all the time I was at home. And we were, somehow, more together than usual; little Susie, a brisk, merry little thing, was complaining of some slight childish ailment, and



my mother would not leave her, so we were more left to ourselves, and we stole together down to Eastfield in the afternoon, to see the friend of the Leslie, that I might be able to redeem my promise to Mary.

CHAPTER XX.

THE time for the trial of the notorious manslayer drew near. Everything connected with his dreadful course of crime had been kept as quiet as possible, but quite enough had transpired to make the people well aware that Hare and his wife were not to be indicted for the crime, but that they were to be admitted as witnesses against Burke and his paramour, who had obtained the unenviable notoriety of being the principals of the gang, and the originators of this most diabolical series of murders. Whether such was the

case or not, true it is, that Burke and the woman with whom he cohabited were the only ones who were put on trial, and that everybody believed that Hare should have met with the same fate.

It is hardly needful for me to say how deep and intense the feeling of the people in this matter was. I have since then seen many times of popular excitement; during my life there have been many great crimes committed, and many famous criminal trials. I have seen Edinburgh wild with joy, and mad with rage—so mad and infuriated, that the soldiers from the Castle have had to clear the streets with levelled bayonets, and keep watch and ward for a time, till the angry passions had cooled down again. But never did I know popular feeling to be so unanimous, yet so quiet and des-



perately resolved. It did not take the usual form of noise and uproar. The smashing of Dr. Knox's windows was a mere piece of by-play, undeserving of the name even of riot. It was far too deep and intense for vulgar clamour. I remember well the state of the public mind as revealed by the people's appearance and deeds, and the ideas which were generally current among them. Almost everybody was engaged in devising some new kind of punishment—some torturing, lingering species of death by which the villains might be made to endure somewhat of the dreadful sufferings they had inflicted. Among all classes this seemed to be the great desideratum, and it was openly expressed and canvassed. I believe the police had some fear that the people would rise openly and seize the murderers, and

slaughter them without trial, on the old principle of Jeddart justice, for they kept the time when the prisoners should be brought from the Calton Jail a close secret, and took them back again, after the trial was over, from the Court of Justiciary, as quietly as possible, as if they feared a rescue.

The trial took place, as all the world knows, and there was the greatest justice done. The best lawyers of Scotland were engaged on both sides, and the evidence was skilfully weighed and tested. The weightiest part of it, coming, as it did, from a vile and tainted source, was subjected to such an examination as the best legal minds in Scotland could give to such a subject. In hardly any case I have every heard of, has the moral certainty been stronger than in this one. No one

could disbelieve the fact that these men and women were perfect giants in the art of murder, and that many more persons had fallen victims to their guile and cruelty, and love of money, than had been named. Yet in no case that I remember was it so difficult to procure legal evidence of the facts; and up to the last moment the Lord Advocate, the Crown prosecutor, was by no means assured of his verdict.

The jury therefore could hardly be blamed for only bringing in Burke, the head of the gang, guilty, while his paramour was dismissed with a verdict of not proven; and that the other vile couple, who had been King's evidence that day, should get their freedom for the help, such as it was, which they had rendered in proving Burke guilty, to save their own guilty heads from the scaffold. But even

then, while the Parliament House was yet ringing with the cheers of the multitude, who filled the square adjoining, rejoicing over the verdict as an instalment, the others, though legally free, could not be dismissed; for their safety, they were retained under the protection of the law. They would have been torn limb from limb had they been recognized, and so, for safety, they were all conveyed back to the prison for a time.

My participation in the scene in the Court was but a slight one, yet it was no joke to me to have to stand before the Lords and such an array of lawyers as the Court presented that day. I had never been in a court of justice before. I knew nothing of an oath, and was so overwhelmed by the awful solemnity of that appeal to God, and by the novelty of my position, that I

could not tell either what the place was like or anything whatever of the proceedings. I was in fact entirely confounded by the peculiarity of my position. I gave my evidence, indeed, told all that I had seen, and answered the questions which were put to me, clearly enough, I suppose. As to how I did it I have not the smallest remembrance; but Mr. Chapman, who was in the court, said that I did very well, and did not stammer or grow confused. I know this, that I never was more glad in my life of anything than I was when my examination was over and I was permitted to go away. I dare say I might have remained in the Court if I had liked, but I was not aware of that, and as my evidence had not been of so very great importance, I was not likely to be required again; if I was, they had only to send a very short distance for me,

and I could be found in a few minutes. Out of the court, a great crowd filled the square and the High Street. All about the High Church was thronged with people eager to hear what was going on, and how the trial was progressing. When I got out into the passages, I was at once beset by eager inquirers; and as soon as it became known that I had been a witness, I got a kind of ovation. There were two or three witnesses who would have received a reception of quite a different kind, of whom the officers had to take a paternal charge for their safety. The crowd was so great, that I should have found great difficulty in getting out, had it not been that I had just been adding my mite to the evidence, which was to condemn, as the people hoped, the murderers, so they good-naturedly made way for me, and assisted me to get out. It

was quite a spectacle which awaited me at the door, that crowd of upturned faces stern and eager, those eyes so fierce, in which no spark of ruth or pity gleamed. I have not the slightest doubt that it would have gone hard with the jury had their verdict been other than guilty. They had quite enough to do to protect themselves, when it became known that they had said "Not Proven" with reference to one of the accused.

In the shop I was compelled to tell, as well as I was able, how things were going on, and what I thought of the proceedings, and the likelihood of a speedy verdict. Everybody in the shop envied me the chance I had had, and almost reviled me because I could tell them so little—*they* should have done so much better if they had but had the luck. Would they? Well,

some of them might—Ned Davies I have no doubt, for he was as pert and impudent as a cocksparrow; but I fancy the other lads, under the influence of that solemn oath and the imposing scene which the Court presented, would have been just as much awed and confounded as I was.

It was late at night, and the expectation of the people still crowding the street had each moment been becoming more intense, when it was rumoured that the jury had left the box and retired to their room.

“What for?” was the universal and indignant query—“what need was there of deliberation to find such atrocious and diabolical miscreants guilty.” People seemed astounded that there should be even a pause or a shadow of doubt about the matter, or that they should have a chance of escape; and their murmurs must, one would

fancy, have penetrated to the very ears of jurors and judges. I have no doubt the fifty minutes the jury were absent seemed to those seething masses the longest period of the day. But by-and-bye the result of their deliberations became known, and then the people burst out into a shout of triumph, as if a time of jubilee, or the news of a great victory, had come. True, there were murmurs both loud and deep at the escape of the wretched woman who had been tried along with the man; but the verdict of the jury, and the subsequent sentence of William Burke, were hailed with shouts of approval by the waiting multitude, as at least an instalment of the much-longed-for vengeance.

It was the first scene of the kind, the first trial that I had seen anything of, even so far as these mere street manifesta-

tions were concerned I have seen many trials, and heard many sentences of condemnation since then, but in no case which either fell under my own observation, or about which I have read, has there been anything like the spirit which the Edinburgh people manifested in this case.

So far as I can remember, the popular sympathy seems ever to be with the accused, and, instead of rejoicing at his condemnation, the multitude would be better pleased with his acquittal. But as there was no pity on the stern, grave faces which I had seen filling the Parliament Square, so there was no pity in their hearts, nor, indeed, in the hearts of anyone in Edinburgh, gentle or simple, for this dreadful man. The crimes had been so atrocious, the number of victims so large, the procedure so cool, calculat-

ing, and diabolical, and the end in view so base and sordid, while the special circumstances were so appalling, that all approved, and felt a sense of relief, when the verdict became known. The only other feeling evident was one of regret that the whole four were not involved in the same doom.

During the time intervening between the trial and execution of William Burke, I had been two or three times at Meadowside, where of course I gave a minute account of my court experience, and described the scene in the Lawnmarket and the Parliament Square on Christmas Eve. The ladies were as kind as ever; Sir William had begun to take more decided notice of me than he had done since the first day when I was introduced to him.

Miss Grahame no sooner heard of Menie, who had really come in to try how she should like Miss Elspeth, than she made me bring her out on the first Sunday. It turned out that Miss Elspeth was their dressmaker—a fact which at once gave the old woman a much higher place in my mind, and made my mother think it could not be a bad place for Menie to learn her trade, after all—and Menie would have been sure, anyway, to come into contact with them. But having been asked to Meadowside did Menie a great deal of good, and caused Miss Elspeth, who was rather a cranky-tempered old maiden, to be much kinder, and to receive Menie at once into cousinship, which before she seemed rather shy of doing. That Mary Leslie and Menie should get on well together was to me a matter of course; and if I was not

as happy and contented as a boy could be, I certainly ought to have been so, but truth to tell, I was not by any means.

I never saw a man really hanged but one, and that was William Burke. A good many executions took place while I was serving my time in the Lawnmarket, but I never would go to see another. I am not going to say anything about it; the scaffold, thrusting its black arms up to the sky like an avenging Nemesis, the grizzly hangman and the doomed wretch, are rather too ghastly subjects, so I gladly pass them by. But the scene in the High Street, Lawnmarket, and Parliament Square, I cannot pass by in the same way. Perhaps it may not be known—but I fancy there is not a finer bit of street in all Europe than the High Street at these points, or one more pic-

turesque and interesting in every point of view. Well, this historical street was that bleak January night and morning filled with some thirty thousand people, met to make sure that the villain murderer did not escape—met, in fact, in that spirit which would have made the majority volunteer hangman, had there been need. No pity nor relenting had the murderer shown—no ruth nor sympathy had the multitude for him. The high houses were crowded at every window as if it was a pleasing spectacle. The severe weather—and it was genuine Scottish January weather—did not daunt, nor seem to trouble those fierce men waiting for the advent of the manslayer, preparatory to his final exit. People of every class of the community were there, people from every part of Scotland were there—men and women were there—and there was



not the least appearance of anything save the fixed determination of seeing this tragedy to an end. And they did see it terminate. Never before, save, perhaps, when the mysterious band hanged Porteous from the dyer's pole in the Grassmarket, was there seen in Edinburgh the like determination, the like unity of purpose, or a hatred to a criminal, at all resembling that of this morning's gathering. It seemed positively a pleasure to these crowds to be participators in the last solemn act, and it was with shouts of triumph, loud and oft repeated, that they hailed the grim closing finale of William Burke.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.



